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ANSWER

TO

PAYNE's

AGE OF REASON.

WITH

A SHORT VIEW OF THE OBEDIENCE

WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE BOUND TO YIELD

TO THE POWERS THAT BE.

BY

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PITTENWEEM.

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PREFACE.

DURING the courſe of my miniſtry, it has been my principal ſtudy to entertain my hearers by explaining and enforcing theſe doctrines and duties, with regard to which, Chriſtians of all denominations are agreed; ſo far as their public profeſſion is founded on the Bible; without harping on the Shibboleth of any party.

To rail againſt ſuch as profeſs revealed religion, is unmanly, anti-chriſtian, and inconſiſtent with the genuine ſpirit of the goſpel;—I wiſh to adopt the ſentiments, and imitate the conduct of the Pſalmiſt "I am a companion of all them who fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts." I have on every occaſion endeavoured to guard againſt adding fuel to the fire of angry controverſy,—I conſider moſt of the differences which obtain among Chriſtians, as rather verbal than real; and if proper allowance was made for the imperfection of language, might ſoon terminate, and if in ſome leſſer matters, men cannot exactly agree, mutual forbearance would be

highly becoming the goſpel,—and in character, imitating the Lord Jeſus, who always taught his followers as they were able to bear it. In proof of this we hear that on a certain occaſion he ſaid, "I have many things to ſay unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

But when the moſt important truths are openly denied, it cannot be deemed improper for a miniſter of the goſpel, boldly to ſtand forth in defence of theſe doctrines which he teaches. Were it only to correct a few miſapplied terms, I would conſider it as idle to beſtow pen, ink, and paper, or what is far more valuable, *time*, on a ſubject ſo trifling; but when ſentiments ſubverſive of chriſtianity obtain a currency, it is hoped this will be a ſufficient apology for the preſent attempt, being no invaſion of the peace of civil or religious ſociety.

Among the many advocates for infidelity, none has diſcovered more zeal than Thomas Payne, in a work entitled, *Age of Reaſon, in Two Parts.* His profeſſed deſign is the overthrow of all exiſting ſyſtems of religion, Popiſh and Proteſtant, whether eſtabliſhed or diſſenting. The regal and ſacerdotal offices are repreſented as inimical to the rights of men. Rulers, laws, religion, and her miniſters of every denomination muſt be deſtroyed. Revealed

religion

religion is traduced as a vile cheat, and her miniſters as baſe impoſtors, and both as the cauſe of all the evils that have befallen mankind ſince it was firſt acknowledged.

Treaſon, and infidelity, generally go hand in hand, "denying the Lord Jeſus, deſpiſing dominions, and railing at dignities," is a natural aſſociation and exemplified in the character and conduct of Deiſts in the preſent day; almoſt with one breath they curſe kings, and deride revealed religion with its author. Error is always talkative, and there is ſcarcely an abſurdity, but theſe blaſphemers will attempt to defend.

For ſometime paſt, Payne's Age of Reaſon has been ſtudiouſly circulated in this part of the country; and (if Fame lies not) has gained ſeveral converts to the cauſe of Deiſm. Payne's pamphlet may fall into the hands of ſome who are in a great meaſure unacquainted with the Deiſtical controverſy, having neither money to purchaſe nor time to peruſe ſuch books as have been before the public for many years; for the ſake of ſuch, I have thought proper to lay the following before the public. I am not aſhamed to avow, that I am indebted to men who were zealous for the truth upon the earth, who contended earneſtly for the truth of divine revelation.

velation. Have judged it unneceſſary to introduce new ſentiments, as the ſcheme treated of by Payne is not new, it has been long ago diſcuſſed, weighed in the balance, and found wanting by apologiſts for the ſcriptures; and after all that Upſtart's pretenſions to novelty (Payne's), his pamphlet contains no new argument. In the Age of Reaſon it is admitted that the ſcheme is ſet forth in ſomething of a new dreſs, all that is plauſible is little more than a repetition with ſome new modes of expreſſion long ſince replied to. Payne's ignorance of former times, or a preſumption that he has only to do with people ignorant thereof, is the beſt apology that can be made for him; all that can be termed original or new is no new ornament to the infidel ſcheme, but new abſurdities, deformities and blaſphemies of that ſyſtem.

It would be paying Payne too high a compliment, and raiſing littleneſs into importance to follow him through all his banter, jeſting and ridicule, and had it not been, that ſome (if Fame tells truth) are already moved away from the hope of the goſpel, his pitiful pamphlet ſhould have been buried in perpetual oblivion with himſelf for me.

I have not the vanity to expect either general notice or approbation; the rapid progreſs of infidelity,

ty, and the inveterate prejudices of a party, who admire and adopt the political, and Deiſtical theories of Thomas Payne, will in all probability diminiſh the influence of my endeavours; for when the human mind is once fettered with party prejudices, it can find ſatisfaction only in what has a tendency to increaſe the diſeaſe.

It is a mournful conſideration that men, who have high pretenſions to patriotiſm, ſhould ſwallow the anti-chriſtian tenets of Payne. I have added a few conſiderations on ſubjection to civil rulers, with a view to put Chriſtians on their guard. It is not likely that ſuch will be the pillars of the ſtate, who ſtrain every nerve to deſtroy thoſe of chriſtianity. We can have very little dependence in a time of danger, on thoſe who bend their tongues like a bow for ſlander and blaſphemy,—they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth,—they know not God, being evil men and ſeducers, they grow worſe and worſe. Inſtead of entruſting our liberties, civil or ſacred, in the hands of ſuch; inſtead of putting confidence in theſe men, we muſt "take heed every one of his neighbour, and not truſt in any brother, for every brother will utterly ſupplant, and every neighbour will walk with ſlanders; they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not ſpeak the truth: they have taught their tongue to ſpeak lies,

lies, and weary themſelves to commit iniquity! come out from among them, and be ye ſeparated, &c."

I am not anxious on my own account what reception the following pages meet with; I expect to hear the ſlanders of ſome, becauſe I thus refuſe to bury or betray the truth of divine revelation; but it is no ſmall honor to be reproached by men given up to a ſpirit of railery and reviling;—railing againſt dignities and reviling the doctrines of divine revelation. I deſire, through grace, to account the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the approbation of ſuch apoſtates from revealed religion; and at any rate it muſt be but a ſmall thing to be judged of man's judgment: "The faſhion of this world paſſeth away." Ere long the voice both of cenſure and applauſe will be ſilenced in the duſt. Deiſts afford, in the inſtance of themſelves, a proof of the truth of revealed religion, it is foretold that ſcoffers ſhall ariſe in the laſt times, &c.

PITTENWEEM,
April 16, 1796.

SECT. I.

Of Moral Evidence.

WHEN one hears of revealed religion, it is natural to aſk whether the firſt who acknowledged it ſubmitted their tenets to a candid and free enquiry, or if they were anxious to repreſs inveſtigation, and hide themſelves in obſcurity. If we form a proper eſtimate, the queſtion muſt be determined in favour of religion; for, inſtead of diſcouraging the ſpirit of enquiry, it is clear they encouraged it both by precept and by example. Of one of the teachers of revealed religion it is written, "that he was himſelf learned in all the wiſdom of Egypt." Another ſpeaks of learning as a moſt valuable acquiſition, and even quotes the ſentiments of a heathen poet, with the higheſt approbation, when he deemed it to his purpoſe. Another is ſtill more explicit, and exhorts thoſe to whom he wrote, to ſtudy "to be able to aſſign a reaſon of the hope that was in them." Thoſe perſons who propagate tenets, and yet ſhrink from inveſtigation; are always to be ſuſpected. The author of chriſtianity, ſo far from this, wiſhes men to "ſearch the ſcriptures," which contained the proof of his miſſion and character. The men who firſt

were inſtrumental in propagating revealed religion, while they encouraged free enquiry, proved their integrity and their firm belief of the doctrines which they delivered to others. Such a line of conduct is the very reverſe of what the ſchemes of impoſtors would clearly ſuggeſt. On the ſuppoſition that theſe perſons have deceived mankind, they have done it by means abſolutely inconſiſtent with political practice.

The doctrines of Chriſtianity are calculated to increaſe knowledge,—they aſcertain with preciſion many things concerning which philoſophers wrangled to no purpoſe. They make known truths which muſt have remained for ever ſecret. Ancient philoſophers furniſh a ſtriking proof of the inſufficiency of reaſon, unaſſiſted by divine revelation, in their diverſified and oppoſite theories. Let the world judge then if religion as revealed be calculated to promote ignorance.—The chriſtian religion has tended very much to civilize, as well as inſtruct mankind. Its peaceable ſpirit and the conduct which it exemplifies,—uniformly recommends and enjoins; agree with its peculiar ordinances.

To demonſtrate this, let us take a view of the world without revelation, and attend to indiſputable facts. We need not here croſs the Atlantic. In what condition were the inhabitants of our native country previous to their being favoured with di-

vine revelation? Do we find them in the purſuit of virtue and morality? No, we find them conducting themſelves in a manner ſhocking; too ſhocking to relate. In the moſt polite and learned nations in Europe, the heavenly luminaries were deified, nay almoſt every creature worſhipped as God. It has been found, that men, unaſſiſted by revelation have paid homage to cats and monkies, and the vileſt of reptiles. In ſuch circumſtances, was there no need of divine revelation? In what condition are many nations ſtill who are left to act according to the dictates of nature's light.

Payne (Age of Reaſon, Part II. p. 77.) aſſerts that "it is falſe to ſay that chriſtianity was not eſtabliſhed by the ſword." With what truth this is aſſerted, let the world judge. Chriſtianity, though the beſt cauſe, may be perverted by men of corrupt minds to the baſeſt of purpoſes: it will not follow that this ariſes from the cauſe itſelf, in its native purity and ſimplicity. Let us turn our attention to thoſe nations in Europe where the diſtinguiſhing doctrines of revelation are generally known, as theſe books are tranſlated into the vernacular languages. From among them let us ſelect Great Britain, as it is the land both of civil and religious liberty. At the ſame time, that we view it as a monarchy, of which the ſeveral parts are more cloſely joined than

any republic can be; the effect of this liberty is moſt obvious.

The eſtabliſhment of popery in any kingdom, and perſecution have prevailed. The reformed churches, on the contrary, have purſued a line of conduct the very reverſe; and this in ſtrict conformity to the ſpirit of the goſpel. The facts in regard to this are ſo well known, as to render an enlargement altogether unneceſſary. And Great Britain can afford in her hiſtory no inſtance of barbarity in this relation, ſince the reformation. Intolerant zeal is unknown to chriſtianity. Men who have ſuch high pretenſions to *reaſon* as Payne, ought to diſtinguiſh betwixt the truth of divine revelation itſelf, and the vices to which men of corrupt principles may endeavour to make it ſubſervient. To uſe Payne's own words in preface to The age of Reaſon, (Part II. p. 7.) "It is not becauſe right principles have been violated that they are to be abandoned."

He complains in the ſame preface, "that all his opponents reſort more or leſs, to what they call Scripture evidence and Bible authority, to help them out. They are ſo little maſters of the ſubject, as to confound a diſpute about authenticity, with a diſpute about doctrines, &c."

Whether the charge be well or ill founded I cannot tell, having only ſeen Wakefield's Anſwer; one thing however is clear, that he has led the way;

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in both parts of the Age of Reaſon he has led the dance. He has not only confounded authenticity with doctrines, but has jumbled doctrines, authenticity, and evidence together; I ſhall however put him right, that if he is diſpoſed to write any more, he may know how to begin, and that by treating on the nature of evidence, of which he appears totally ignorant.

There are certain motives which do not fail to influence mankind, as opportunities preſent themſelves. This is clear from fact and experience. Why theſe motives and principles are eſtabliſhed as the ſprings of action, is to be reſolved into the conſummate wiſdom of the Great Creator, who knew how to adapt the world and human nature to each other.

We are accuſtomed to infer the certainty of phyſical appearances from the ſtated laws of nature, by which they are to come to paſs, and when ſuch events do not take place, we conclude, that ſome laws of nature have been ſuſpended or violated. Though the author of nature has fixed theſe laws, he can with the greateſt facility ſuſpend them; and though we cannot be mathematically certain that they ſhall regularly go on; yet we depend upon them with confidence. For example, when we ſee the ſun ſet at night, we without geometrical proof conclude that he will riſe again,—that the ſucceſſion of ſummer and winter will go regularly on; and it

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is upon this ground that the huſbandman plows and ſows, he does it in hope.

Teſtimony is involved in moral evidence, but we draw an erroneous inference when we make it the whole of that evidence. In ſome caſes, where human teſtimony evinces the truth of things; the ſtated laws of nature above mentioned muſt be recurred unto, that we may have full proof of what otherwiſe has only human teſtimony to aſcertain the truth. Recourſe muſt eſpecially be had to theſe principles and motives which generally influence the conduct of man, acting as a reaſonable being. It is neceſſary in the inſtance of teſtimony to conſider the known honour and veracity of the perſon who gives it—It is neceſſary to examine whether or not he could have any motive to influence him to commit a fraud; for every man is influenced in his conduct by ſome motive or other, and matters in regard to this may be ſo circumſtanced, as we may be ſure that it is impoſſible he can be deceitful in giving his teſtimony. How can we be ſure? Becauſe men are naturally averſe to ſhame and contempt; and then we are determined to admit the teſtimony, otherwiſe we muſt forfeit all pretenſions to reaſon and common ſenſe.

There are ſome things, which, in their nature, only admit moral proof, which are as clear as other things that are capable of mathematical demonſtration.

tion. Evidence is the obvious appearance of truth to the mind producing an aſſent to it *as* truth. In mathematical demonſtration, propoſitions derive their force from ſome others already demonſtrated; and theſe from others, till we come to axioms which have no demonſtration. The like muſt hold with regard to moral propoſitions and the principles into which they may be reſolved; for it is the evidence or plainneſs of a propoſition, and not the ſubject matter of it, which renders the denial of it abſurd.

The mind of man yields aſſent to ſome moral concluſions with as little heſitation in regard to their truth, as to mathematical inferences. There are innumerable *places*, *tranſactions*, *perſons* and *facts*, of which we can have no perſonal knowledge, and yet we call them as little in queſtion, as we do geometrical concluſions: this we do every day in the common affairs of life.

Every ſpecies of truth has its own peculiar manner of proof; it is the difference, of the nature of things which are the objects of our knowledge, that lays a foundation for the different methods of arriving at the certainty of them.

Proof differs in kind, according to the nature and properties of the things about which it is adduced. *Geometrical* truths admit of direct demonſtration,—*Phyſical* truths are ſhewn by experiment,—*Moral* truths

truths by teſtimony, by the principles of human nature and ſtated laws.

Payne (Age of Reaſon, Part II. p. 75.) expreſſes himſelf in very ſtrange terms with regard to teſtimony, when he ſays, "Whoever put faith in that account, (namely revelation) puts it in the man from whom the account comes, and that man may have been deceived; or may have dreamed it, or he may be an impoſtor, and may lie." But when we entertain ſuſpicions reſpecting the truth of teſtimony, we ought to diſtinguiſh, betwixt a ſuſpicion that is founded in pure phyſical poſſibility that a man may be an impoſtor; and a ſuſpicion that is founded in the reputation or character of the man who gives his teſtimony, or a defect in the teſtimony itſelf. If the teſtimony be obſcure, inconſiſtent, or be contradicted by higher authority,—if the perſon be of a doubtful character, if he is known to be credulous, partial and careleſs in his general conduct; in ſuch circumſtances, every wiſe man ſhould ſuſpend his judgment, till he obtain proof liable to none of theſe exceptions; on the other hand, if nothing of that can be alleged, there can remain only a pure phyſical poſſiblity of deception.

It is phyſically poſſible, that a man who has a good character for integrity may be hypocritical, and may have a deſign to impoſe upon me—it is phyſically poſſible that a man juſt when going to tell

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me truth, may be ſuddenly ſeized with madneſs and narrate an untruth; theſe caſes muſt be admitted as phyſically poſſible, and theſe equally poſſible with regard to every man, one who has hitherto retained an untainted reputation *may* act a fraudulent and deceitful part.

There is no human teſtimony, but in this acceptation of poſſibility may be deceitful. While it is admitted in part that "it is not the antiquity of a tale, that is any evidence of its truth;" it will not follow, becauſe aſſerted by Payne, "that it is a ſymptom of its being fabulous; for the more ancient any hiſtory pretends to be, the more it has the reſemblance of a fable." (Age of Reaſon, Part II. p. 2.)

When we weigh the credibility of teſtimony, *oral* or *written*, we ought to diſtinguiſh between the decreaſe of credibility which has its riſe in our own minds, and the decreaſe which may belong to the thing itſelf.

The credibility of a teſtimony is leſſened, when deprived of theſe circumſtances which at firſt gave it a ſufficient degree of credit among men. That is, no teſtimony is really diminiſhed, or rendered leſs credible by any cauſe, but the want of the conditions which laid a foundation for its credibility at firſt. It is to be conſidered here, that we ought carefully to diſtinguiſh between the nature of the

thing, and the circumſtances thereof; and the notions which men may entertain with regard to it. There can be no decreaſe of the credibility of teſtimony, delivered by faithful witneſſes, though tranſmitted through a ſeries of ages ever ſo long continued. We hinted juſt now that teſtimony remains equally unqueſtionable, when tranſmitted with all its eſſential circumſtances; when the witneſſes are well qualified, honeſt to repreſent them fairly, and diligent to make enquiry. A matter of fact, which once poſſeſſed evidence ſufficient to recommend it as the object of belief, does not loſe its credibility in ſucceeding ages, however diſtant.

It was admitted in part, that the antiquity of any thing was no proof of its being true, that is antiquity *as ſuch;* ſtill with time collateral evidence may increaſe, to aſſure men farther as to the truth of the teſtimony with regard to the thing narrated and tranſmitted. For though every one is bound to exerciſe his reaſon in forming an eſtimate, yet he muſt conſider it as an important circumſtance, that it has ſtood the trial of ſucceſſive generations;—that men of candour, integrity, and learning, have given it the moſt cordial and unanimous ſuffrage. This is an advantage which men, who lived in a very early period, were deprived of. It is granted, that the thing itſelf is credited upon proper and direct moral proof, ſtill, when they conſider it in uniſon with the

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conſent and approbation of many thouſands, who have formed the very ſame judgment with themſelves. This is a kind of ſuperadded evidence, which affords additional confirmation, ſince multitudes, who lived in different ages and diſtant countries, have all agreed in their belief. So far then is it from truth, "that antiquity ſhews any thing fabulous," that on the contrary, matters of fact may derive circumſtantial evidence to increaſe their credibility from the lapſe of time.

SECT. II.

On the Abſurdity of rejecting Moral Evidence.

HAVING made theſe remarks on the nature of moral evidence, let us examine the iſſue of rejecting proof founded on this ſpecies of evidence.

We all know that the preſervation of order in civil ſociety, by the adminiſtration of juſtice, entirely depends on this kind of evidence. Thoſe who enact and ordain laws, cannot be perſonally preſent in all places, to witneſs the breach of them, or conformity to them: Accordingly, that public juſtice may be adminiſtered in detecting the guilty, and protecting the innocent, it is neceſſary that others be deputed to take cogniſance of men's conduct.

What others have ſeen or heard, or can be inferred by rational circumſtances, muſt be laid before them; and this, when done in a becoming manner, is reckoned by the wiſdom of all nations, to be ſufficient evidence; in caſes of the higheſt importance, where the liberty, property, and life, of the ſubject, are involved. And if teſtimony was not conſidered as ſufficient proof, we ſhould ſoon ſee ſociety diſband. How arrogant would men of vicious principles grow in defiance of laws and lawgivers? All ſubordination and order, ſafety and protection, would end; our perſons would be expoſed to the moſt groſs inſults, and our property to open depredation. If moral evidence be laid aſide, if men's eyes and ears did not guard the public, there would not only be a check upon the execution and the adminiſtration of equal laws, but no means could be employed to prevent any miſchief which might threaten an individual or the public at large. All induſtry and every attempt of individuals to render their circumſtances more comfortable, would be vain; all things would be allowed to go on by chance, without any activity on our part; there could be no room for the exerciſe of theſe powers and faculties beſtowed on us by God; by which we naturally conſult what appears beſt. Reaſon would be no bleſſing to us in ſuch circumſtances, intercourſe with men can be of no avail, if moral certainty, as founded upon evidence be inadmiſſible;

miſſible; we behove to be deſtitute of all motives and principles of action, and no better than the beaſts that periſh.

This is not all; ſociety muſt inſtantly diſſolve, if the above evidence is not admitted. Mutual confidence is one great bond of civil ſociety, which, if taken away, perpetual jealouſy and endleſs ſuſpicion muſt occupy the place of truſt and confidence. Men muſt be ever on their guard; they muſt conſider every one as an enemy, waiting an opportunity to ruin them. They would conſider themſelves as ſafeſt when at the greateſt diſtance from each other; —all concern about the public good would be ſuperceded by private intereſt and perſonal ſafety. On this hypotheſis, we would ſee every ſociety diſbanded and diſperſed, all commerce and diſtinctions among men muſt inſtantly terminate. Such a ſtate of matters would pleaſe Payne; princes and ſubjects would be on a level, rulers and ruled; friendſhip among the latter would not be realiſed, more than government among the former. Every man muſt try, (on this hypotheſis) to ſeek ſhelter for himſelf.

All the ſocial affections being extinguiſhed, as occaſions offered, open violence and hoſtility would be the neceſſary reſult.

Farther, Our civil liberty and property, or at leaſt our enjoying them, depends upon moral evidence; Birthright privileges depend upon this ſort of

of evidence; or whatever we have by *will* and *teſtament*. In many caſes, perſonal knowledge by our external ſenſes is impoſſible, and in other caſes no wiſe men have inſiſted on it, and our aſſent in ſuch caſes depends entirely upon moral evidence. This is ſo clear that it ſtands in need of no illuſtration.

Some matters of fact are ſo obvious by teſtimony as to give us the fulleſt aſſurance of their certainty; or in other words, matters may be ſo circumſtanced as to leave no ground to entertain any ſuſpicion of fraud or deceit; and to entertain dark ſuſpicions, would hold us out in the moſt ridiculous point of light.

In believing hiſtory, it is not neceſſary that we ourſelves ſaw the things performed which we are called to believe, for this is not crediting the report of another, but the teſtimony of our own ſenſes; if we muſt ſee the things, then we could believe nothing unleſs we were perſonally preſent.

If what we have ſtated reſpecting evidence be not admitted; the iſſue is, that we cannot believe any writings unleſs we ſee the author write and ſubſcribe his book; and if this be requiſite, there are hardly any writings that we could believe. I have mentioned this, becauſe it ſeems to lurk in Payne's pamphlet, though he does not verbally ſtate it, viz. that he never ſaw Moſes, Chriſt, Paul, &c. and how can it be known that ever there were ſuch perſons, and how

how can we be ſure that they ever did or wrote ſuch things. I aſk Payne and his followers, Did they ever ſee Alexander the Great, Julius Cæſar, or King Henry VIII. of England? And yet do they not believe that there were ſuch perſons?—On the one hand, if they do not believe that there were ſuch men, becauſe they never ſaw them; they have in ſo far laid aſide the nature of man, and are fitter for a dark room and a ſtrait jacket, than to be reaſoned with. On the other hand, if they believe that there were ſuch men, though they never ſaw them; then why not believe that there were ſuch perſons as Jeſus Chriſt, Moſes, Paul, &c. and that they did and wrote the things ſaid of them.

It is not a ſufficient ground to reject evidence by teſtimony, &c. becauſe there have been many falſe hiſtories; or in other words, we are not to diſbelieve, becauſe there may be a phyſical poſſibility of deception; for though there have been cheats and impoſtors in the world, it will not thence follow that there are no faithful and honeſt men. If moral evidence be not admitted, mutual truſt and confidence muſt be deſtroyed; civil ſociety muſt diſband and domeſtic felicity break up. Bad as the world is, there always have been, and ſtill is, ſome integrity in it, and will be, while God continues the human race, and government over men. Juſtice and honeſty is neceſſary to the being and order of

ſociety.

ſociety. A phyſical poſſibility of being deceived, never influences mankind in their mutual intercourſe one with another. Trade and commerce is carried on upon the principle of moral evidence, for it can admit of no other. The merchant believes that there are ſuch places in the world as Madras, Bengal, China, Batavia, &c. in the Eaſt Indies; that there are ſuch iſlands as Jamaica, St Kitts, Barbadoes, &c. though they never ſaw them; a man puts his life in the hand of his phyſician, yea in the hand of his barber. It becomes a reaſonable being, not to believe a thing becauſe it may poſſibly be true, ſo it is equally incumbent on him, not to reject teſtimony becauſe there may be a phyſical poſſibility of its being falſe.

I would not have this to be viewed as a digreſſion, for a great many cavillers lay ſtreſs upon this, mean as it is, they have little more to keep their infidelity in countenance. They have learned to flouriſh a little on ſome other topics of railery, but when puſhed, this is their laſt ſtrong hold—*The order of the day*, with them is, you have hearſay evidence, you cannot be ſure.

I aſk what they mean? Do they mean that we cannot be mathematically certain? If they do, whoever ſuppoſed or talked of mathematical certainty in caſes of that kind; for in every caſe of this kind, we have a certainty that ariſes from moral proof,

equal

equal to that which is founded upon geometrical demonſtration, as was ſhewn formerly;—and in the nature of the thing can admit of no other kind of proof but what is founded upon moral evidence.

SECT. III.

Of Moral Evidence, as affording ſecurity againſt Impoſition.

IT is ſimply impoſſible to impoſe facts upon mankind at the time they are ſaid to take place, provided they be ſuch facts as come within the reach of men's ſenſes; for in this caſe they muſt be inſtantly detected. For example, let any man in the town of Pittenweem give out that he divided the Forth yeſterday in preſence of all the inhabitants, and that he carried them all to Dunbar on dry land; no ſuch ſtory could paſs for a truth, for John and James, William and Janet, &c. nay the whole would give him the lie, and tell that no ſuch thing took place; none of them having been at Dunbar that day; and far leſs that they travelled in ſuch a manner. But ſays Payne, admitting all this, "it is evident the books were not written at the time, but hundreds of years after, (Part II. p. 4.) To this it is anſwered, that if the things ſaid to have happened, were

not only done openly, but that public monuments were erected, and certain rites performed, to perpetuate the remembrance of them; and theſe bearing a date as ancient as the facts, ſufficiently guard againſt any impoſition in after ages; for whenever ſuch a thing was invented, and no ſuch monuments remaining, and the experience of all who behoved to know that they never were engaged in the obſervation of ſuch and ſuch ceremonies, would detect the fraud. Let Thomas Payne invent ſome tale that ſuch a thing took place 1000 years ago, he might perhaps get ſome credulous republican to believe it; but if, at ſame time, he ſhould ſay, that in teſtimony of the truth of it, from that day to this, every perſon when *eight* years of age had one of his ears cut off, and that every man in the country wanted an ear, and this was in proof of the fact, which he ſaid had taken place,—that it had been tranſmitted from age to age; and had been uniformly practiſed as a laſting monument of what he had aſſerted, took place; in theſe circumſtances he would inſtantly be detected by the whole country, who muſt give him the lie with regard to the mark of wanting an ear; and as the fact of their wanting an ear was part of the original ſtory, the whole would be viewed as an impudent fabrication.

With regard to Moſes, he could not have perſuaded ſo many perſons that he brought them out

of

of Egypt,—through the red ſea,—fed them miraculouſly in the wilderneſs; if theſe things had not been true, for the teſtimony of every man's ſenſes among the choſen tribes muſt have given him the lie. He could not have impoſed his writings upon them in any after period, ſeeing theſe writings ſaid, that all the things mentioned were done publicly in their preſence. Deut. xi. 2—8. And theſe books could not have been invented in any ſucceeding age, and publiſhed in his name; Why? Becauſe they ſay that they were publiſhed in the days of Moſes, and depoſited in the ark. Deut. xxxi. 24—26. and there was alſo a copy to be left with the king. Deut. xvii. 18, 19. In theſe quotations, theſe books ſpeak of themſelves, not merely as hiſtory, but as the ſtanding law of the Jewiſh nation, and obligatory both on king and ſubjects; and in any age after Moſes, it would have been impoſſible to have made a whole nation believe, that they had acknowledged theſe from the days of Moſes, to that period in which they are ſuppoſed to have been invented. How could they be perſuaded that they had obſerved them before they had heard of them? I aſk the ignorant quibbler, if ever there was a code of ſham-laws palmed upon any nation, ſince the world began? If he cannot anſwer in the affirmative, how has he the effrontery to aſſert thus much of the laws of the Hebrews? Nay, the books of Moſes have the

very higheſt degree of evidence, becauſe they give the hiſtory of their laws being reduced to practice ever ſince the time they were enacted. The paſſover, to perpetuate the remembrance of Iſrael's ſafety, when death entered every houſe in Egypt, and many others. The Old Teſtament gave Iſrael other inſtitutions as ſo many public recognitions of the mercies they had received from God.

In the 4th chapter of Joſhua it is written, that twelve ſtones were ſet up, that when their children ſhould aſk the deſign of them, they ſhould be informed, and alſo told particularly, of the fact they were intended to commemorate; and it was ſuch a fact, and ſo circumſtanced, as it could not be impoſed on the people at the time when it is ſaid to have taken place, nor afterwards; if the fact of their miraculous paſſage over Jordan be denied, and if it be ſaid that the ſtones were erected by ſome deſigning perſon, and that that perſon invented the book of Joſhua, and gave out that it had been compoſed by Joſhua at that time, and alluded to the 12 ſtones in proof of it; every man in this caſe would reply, We know of the 12 ſtones at Gilgal, but we never heard this aſſigned as the reaſon of their erection, neither did we ever hear of this book of Joſhua; where has it been? How came you by it after ſuch a long time? Beſides this book ſays that we were to

be

be taught, and that we were to teach our children concerning all this; but we never were informed of any ſuch thing, nor have we ever told our children, for we could not, having never heard of it before. (See Short and Eaſy Method with the Deiſts.)

The ſame writings inform us, that a particular tribe was appointed by God as prieſts, by whom, and none elſe, all ſolemn inſtitutions were to be celebrated. Now, in whatever age theſe writings may be ſuppoſed to be forged after the days of the writers, it is impoſſible that they could be received as true, unleſs the deceivers could firſt make the whole nation ſo credulous as believe that they had received theſe writings from their fathers,—had been inſtructed in them when they were young, and had taught them to their children;—moreover, that they had all been circumciſed, and had circumciſed their children in obedience to what was commanded in theſe writings. Now, was it poſſible to impoſe upon a whole nation, ſo far as make them believe they had received books that ſaid they had done ſuch and ſuch things, while the whole was falſe.

I ſhall, for the ſake of argument, ſuppoſe that theſe things were obſerved and practiſed before theſe writings were forged, and that theſe writings were impoſed upon the Jews, in making them believe that they had obſerved ſuch and ſuch rites in memory of the things inſerted in theſe forgeries. But here

here the very ſame abſurdities preſent themſelves; for it muſt be allowed, that the Jews obſerved theſe rites in commemoration of ſomething, or that contrary to reaſon and fact; that they obſerved them they knew not for what: ſtill it was impoſſible to perſuade them that they had performed them in commemoration of things they had never ſo much as heard of before theſe writings which are ſuppoſed to have been forged. Thus we have the higheſt ſecurity againſt any impoſition upon the Jews after, as well as at the time when the things are ſuppoſed to have taken place.

To ſay that the hiſtory we aſcribe to Moſes was not written at the time that Chriſtians pretend, but might be the invention of later ages, is to ſay and aſſert without proof.

Moſes was uniformly owned as the Jewiſh Lawgiver; the Jews univerſally believe it, and affirm it (here is affirmative proof,) they have in every age paid the higheſt regard to his memory. The moſt ancient heathen writers do not deny there was ſuch a perſon as Moſes, nor call in queſtion the truth of his giving laws to the Jews. The ignorant blaſphemer cannot give any account when, or by whom, this hiſtory, and the facts related in the five books aſcribed to Moſes, were forged. He cannot give a name to this imaginary hiſtorian, who perſonated Moſes: he can neither tell us where he lived, nor

produce

produce authentic vouchers of what he imagines, and then aſſerts.

The queſtion with regard to the goſpels and epiſtles is, Whether theſe writings contain a true account of what they at firſt declared to the world? or if they are ſpurious, and an impoſture which we ought to reject?

It was impoſſible that the writings of theſe perſons we call evangeliſts and apoſtles, could be impoſed on the world, *as their's*, while they were alive, if they had not been their's. Such a glaring impoſition muſt have been diſcovered by perſons who paid ſuch unremitting attention to the ſtate and progreſs of Chriſtianty;—mankind could not be impoſed upon, while the firſt teachers of that ſyſtem were alive; though it is admitted that the founders of a party may outlive the reputation of their own ſyſtem, their tenets may be ſuppreſſed by external force, or argument. But that tenets, which they never publiſhed, ſhould be invented, and uniformly paſs as the true doctrines of ſuch and ſuch men, in the very age in which they lived, while there was ſufficient opportunity to detect the fraud, is altogether incredible.

There could be no fraud as to the writings of theſe men while they were alive; and the ſame may be ſaid of them while the original manuſcripts were preſerved in the Chriſtian world. The caſe muſt have

have been the ſame, while every one might ſearch theſe original manuſcripts; any attempt to impoſe muſt have been in vain, ſo long as they were extant. Tertullian ſignifies, that ſome of them were preſerved to the age in which he lived, viz. till the end of the ſecond century, and to preſerve writings much longer is common at this day.

It is equally impoſſible, that any particular denomination of profeſſed Chriſtians could impoſe on the world afterwards, by adulterating theſe writings.

No particular party would have ventured to do this, for they would ſee that every oppoſite intereſt muſt have been conſcious of the fraud. And thus the very diſputes which have ariſen in the Chriſtian world have been ſubſervient to the preſervation of the truth; though animoſities and diviſions among ſuch as profeſs Chriſtianity be a mournful conſideration, they have tended to its ſecurity; by this means one party has been a check on another; at ſame time it will not be pled, that the different ſectaries could invent them by a general confederacy. While theſe writings could not be impoſed on the world by the friends of the Chriſtian religion, far leſs by its avowed enemies; this they could not do; ſuch a cheat could not be impoſed upon the world by its avowed enemies; in open diſregard of all its zealous friends in all nations, who were deeply intereſted in the cauſe.

Let

Let any man weigh the following things in an equal balance, and ſay, that mankind have been impoſed upon, in receiving the *Books* of the New Teſtament for what they are generally believed to be.

Theſe books were originally written in the moſt celebrated language then ſpoken in the world; were diſperſed and tranſlated into various languages different from that in which they were originally compoſed. They were not retained in private hands as myſteries, which ought not to be revealed; but in public libraries, where every individual had an opportunity to ſearch and ſee; they have been openly quoted by ſuch as have avowed themſelves advocates for Chriſtianity, and by enemies to that cauſe; a great part of them were addreſſed to large ſocieties, and that in different parts of the world. They have been uniformly recited in public aſſemblies, and privately read, which made a deep impreſſion of them on the minds of mankind; and all ſectaries amid their angry controverſies have made appeals to them as the teſt of orthodoxy.

Such as have been apoſtates from the cauſe, never hinted that they were an impoſition on mankind, though they muſt have been privy (at leaſt ſome of them) to the impoſture, had there been any, and had every opportunity to have done it.

Theſe things, if duly weighed, ſhew that there are no writings extant that have ſuch evidence of

 authenticity.

authenticity. Let Payne and his friends no more complain " that in the anſwers to the former part of the age of reaſon undertake to *ſay*, and they put ſome ſtreſs thereon, that the authenticity of the Bible is as well eſtabliſhed, as that of any other ancient book, as if our belief of the one could become any rule for our belief of the other." Part II. p. 3.

It is to no purpoſe to aver with Payne (Part II. p. 65.) " Thoſe who are not much acquainted with eccleſiaſtical hiſtory may ſuppoſe that the book called the New Teſtament has exiſted ever ſince the time of Jeſus Chriſt, as they ſuppoſe that the books aſcribed to Moſes, have exiſted ever ſince the time of Moſes. But the fact is hiſtorically otherwiſe, there was no ſuch book as the New Teſtament, till more than three hundred years after the time that Chriſt is ſaid to have lived.

" At what time the books aſcribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, began to appear is altogether a matter of uncertainty. There is not the leaſt ſhadow of evidence of who the perſons were that wrote them, nor at what time they were written; and they might as well have been called by the names of any of the other ſuppoſed apoſtles, as by the names they are now called. The originals are not in the poſſeſſion of any Chriſtian church exiſting, any more than the two tables of ſtone written on, as they pretend, by the finger of God,

upon

upon mount Sinai, and given to Moſes, are in the poſſeſſion of the Jews. And even if they were there is no poſſibility of proving the hand-writing in either caſe. At the time theſe were written there was no printing, and conſequently there could be no publication, otherwiſe than by written copies, which any man might take or alter at pleaſure, and call them originals. Can we ſuppoſe it is conſiſtent with the wiſdom of the Almighty, to commit himſelf and his will to man upon ſuch precarious means as theſe: or that it is conſiſtent that we ſhould pen our faith upon ſuch uncertainties? We cannot make nor alter, nor even imitate ſo much as one blade of graſs that he has made, and yet we can alter words of God, as eaſily as words of man." &c.

All this jargon is to no purpoſe, Chriſtians do not aſſert that the writings of the New Teſtament have undergone no alteration in things which are of little moment. It is not aſſerted that every letter, ſyllable, or word, is exactly the ſame as when the original writers ſigned them. If Thomas Payne did not know, he could be informed, that there are various ways by which an author may be abuſed, and that perhaps no book has altogether eſcaped this calamity. Chriſtians knew before Payne was born, that any writing may be hurt by *time*, how eaſy it is for miſtakes to ariſe by contractions in writing, the careleſſneſs of librarians, the pride of critics, and

villany of impoſtors. What of all this? will theſe things leſſen the credit of any writing? we do not think a book ſpurious on theſe accounts, for if this was the caſe, we muſt abandon every book to the flames; even Payne's Age of Reaſon itſelf, for he admits that an error has crept into the 1ſt Part; if this were ſufficient to diſprove any author, why do any credit the age of reaſon to be Thos. Payne's. But ſtill it is maintained that theſe writings are the ſame which the authors left behind them, and that not only as to the ſubſtance of them, but every eſſential circumſtance; ſo far are they from being invented by other perſons, and impoſed upon mankind in their ſtead. Even Julian, who was moſt ſolicitous to leſſen the dignity of Jeſus Chriſt, takes theſe books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Paul, &c. as authentic.

Though Payne aſſerts that "there was no ſuch book as the New Teſtament till three hundred years after the time that Chriſt is ſaid to have lived;" yet, as I ſhall ſhew in the ſequel, the fact is hiſtorically otherwiſe; and he himſelf (Payne) being judge, "it is uncertain at what time theſe books appeared," however, there is no end of his nonſenſe. From what has been already ſaid, reſpecting moral evidence, it militates nothing againſt their authenticity that we did not ſee them write and ſubſcribe them. However I ſhall not entirely overlook what he aſ-

ſerts

ſerts reſpecting the New Teſtament, "as theſe writings were not known till above three hundred years after the time in which Chriſt is ſaid to have lived." The fact, as already ſaid is hiſtorically otherwiſe. Within a hundred years after the death of Chriſt, we find theſe writings cited by Juſtin, and Irenæus; not to mention the Epiſtles of Clemens, Ignatius, and Polycarp; and from them downward, in a continued ſucceſſion of writers; and theſe quotations were the ſame as we have them in the ſcriptures at this day. When we conſider how near to that period the Apoſtle John lived, and that Irenæus was taught by Polycarp,—when we conſider, that this Polycarp was ordained by John, and lived near him,—the ſtreſs that Irenæus lays upon theſe ſcriptures, in his oppoſition to *oral tradition*, and how poſitively he makes appeals to them; —if we conſider that ſoon after, the Greek and Latin, the Roman and African churches, and thoſe of Syria and Egypt, uniformly agree in quoting theſe writings all in the very ſame words; from theſe things it will appear what a malignant lie Payne tells. By the end of *one hundred* years they were general, and read in Chriſtian churches. Nay, they were in the hands of the enemies of Chriſtianity, *Trypho* in particular. Celſus had alſo read them. They were tranſlated into the Latin and Syriac ſoon after. Having ſtated thus much, in what follows

I may

I may be allowed to quote their writings, not as divine, but as Payne does other writings.

Payne, in the Age of Reaſon, Part I. p. 7. and Part II. p. 58, 59, 60, &c. diſcovers the higheſt degree of *ſatire* and invective, concerning the reſurrection of Chriſt, as narrated by the New Teſtament writers; but here he ſeems to be very ſparing of argument and common ſenſe. It is ungenerous to play upon an argument with wit, as it is often called, when the ſubject is of ſuch importance. It diſcovers a mean, ſordid, and contemptible temper, to ſtand at a great diſtance, pelting chriſtianity with ridicule, when the perſon has a fair opportunity to come to cloſe quarters and end the diſpute in an honourable manner: it is no merit to ridicule. It is a very eaſy way to get the advantage of any author, to ridicule his writings,---a very little quantity of groſs wit, or rather ill manners, will go a very great way. Deiſts, however, in every age, have adopted this plan, and they have been pretty ſucceſsful with ſome. Perſons who are otherwiſe groſsly ignorant, feel a great degree of pleaſure when religion is inſulted: they take up a rude jeſt againſt the miniſters of the chriſtian religion, though in another caſe they are unable to diſtinguiſh ſatire from compliment. So great is the power of averſion, that with men who have high pretenſions to *reaſon* and

and *common ſenſe*, ſophiſtry is received in the room of demonſtration.

It is but a pitiful triumph to gain men's aſſent by an appeal to their fancies, inſtead of informing their judgments. It muſt mortify a man of feeling to think that he is beholden to the vices, and not to the judgment of mankind, for reputation. Payne, in the manner in which he has traduced the reſurrection, has only followed men of his views who have gone before him; he has tried to abuſe the doctrine of Chriſt's reſurrection with ſcoffs and laughter, inſtead of diſproving its credibility; he has ſubſtituted a torrent of reproaches and virulent epithets, for argument. But reproach and bold aſſertion is the cheapeſt argument, either in oppoſing or in defending chriſtianity.

Payne aſſerts, that the witneſſes were incompetent as to their number, "a ſmall number of perſons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to ſay, they *ſaw* it, and all the reſt of the world are called upon to believe it, &c." I preſume, however, that when Payne fled from England to eſcape public juſtice, a ſmaller number of witneſſes would have convicted him than eight or nine. To attack ſuch a number as being incompetent, ſhews the groſſeſt ignorance of moral proof; for the number of perſons who teſtify concerning a matter of fact, independent of

other

other circumſtanees, is not concluſive. In the preſent caſe, it ſhocks the feelings to think that a lie ſhould be concealed, more eſpecially among ſuch a number of fraudulent individuals, and thus to delude the world, ſeems a miracle ſurpaſſing all the miracles recorded in the New Teſtament. Such a cabal could not fail to tell tales on each other ſooner or later. There were others beſides, who unanimouſly affirmed the truth of Chriſt's reſurrection; and their number was not deſpicable. A Chriſtian writer (Paul) declares that in his time there were the greater part of five hundred then alive, who all at one particular time ſaw him after he aroſe.

But ſays Payne, (Part II. p. 61.) "As to the account of Chriſt's being ſeen by more than five hundred at once, it is only Paul who ſays it, and not the five hundred who ſay it for themſelves, it is therefore but the teſtimony of one man, &c." It is ſtrange to hear a man diſcover ſuch groſs ignorance as to hiſtorical evidence. If Paul wrote a falſehood, why did not theſe perſons detect him, as he wrote while they were alive. But even laying aſide Paul's hiſtory, the teſtimony of the reſt deſerves the higheſt regard, as declaring ſomething they had perſonal knowledge of. We all know, that in a caſe where a man pretends ſenſible demonſtration for the truth of what he ſays, he at leaſt deſerves attention, as this will convince any man of *reaſon*, that the matter

ter it at leaſt deſerves enquiry, unleſs he had given grounds to ſuſpect his veracity otherwiſe. Now when a conſiderable number of men ſay they were eye-witneſſes, their evidence muſt be valid unleſs there be a good reaſon for rejecting their teſtimony. Theſe perſons did not only ſee Chriſt once but repeatedly; and in ſuch a manner as to leave no room to ſuſpect that fancy had any thing to do in the matter.—They converſed familiarly with, and received inſtructions from him; he commanded them to tarry at Jeruſalem till endued with power from on high; he upbraided them for their unbelief, in not believing the truth of his reſurrection, on the teſtimony of ſuch as had ſeen him—That they were bleſſed and comforted by him:---ſaw him actually aſcend to heaven. And after this they returned to Jeruſalem, in obedience to his command, and were edued with powers in exact accompliſhment of his promiſe. Is it poſſible for imagination to deceive *ſo many?* Could they think they ſaw a perſon occaſionally for about ſix weeks,---that they eat and drank in his preſence,---that he expounded the ſcriptures to them, gave them promiſes and various rules for the government of the church. Could this, I ſay, be fancy? If this proof be inadmiſſable, they muſt have been the moſt notorious villains. It is therefore of the higheſt importance to examine the character of the witneſſes, and the manner in which they gave

their evidence reſpecting this event. The *manner* in which the witneſſes gave their teſtimony deſerves attention. This they gave in a manner the moſt ſolemn. They invoked the name of the Supreme Being as witneſs; they appealed to him as the judge of the ſincerity of their hearts; and in proof of this, they declared that they were inveſted with the power of working miracles, to which they appealed, for the truth of their doctrine. Such appeals amounted to ſolemn oaths, which, by the common conſent of men, are the laſt reſource for evidence. It is true men have been ſo wicked as to deny the being of a God, but this is of no avail in the preſent caſe, unleſs it can be made evident that the witneſſes of Chriſt's reſurrection were poſſeſſed of ſuch flagitious principles.

Again theſe perſons did not narrate what happened far diſtant, either as to time or place. If perſons were to tell of ſomething that happened a number of years before, and at a great diſtance as to place, their evidence might be obnoxious to objections, for want of opportunity to make proper enquiry. Whereas, in the preſent inſtance, the caſe is quite otherwiſe. Theſe witneſſes avowed the fact on the ſpot where the thing took place; they affirmed that he aroſe at the very place where he was crucified, nor did they delay the publication of his reſurrection till the matter might be in a great meaſure

meaſure out of mind, no, they did it while his death was in the mouths of all, and while perſons might have been adduced to diſprove the fact, had they declared a falſehood. They did not conceal the event, but openly declared it: it was not privately told to a few of their own party, they proclaimed it openly when Jeruſalem was crowded with foreigners. They adopted no clandeſtine means to publiſh it; they went into the ſynagogues and temple and publiſhed it. They did not chooſe to inflame the mob or influence the vulgar, where it might have been impoſſible to detect them, but they appeared in the moſt auguſt aſſemblies of the Jews, and teſtified before the rulers and prieſts concerning the fact. Peter delivered a very animated ſpeech, in one of theſe aſſemblies: "Ye rulers of the people and elders of *Iſrael*, if we be this day examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Iſrael, that by the name of Jeſus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raiſed from the dead, even by him doth this man ſtand before you whole." What intrepidity does Peter diſcover here? Sure no man can with juſtice charge Chriſt's reſurrection with ſecrecy, when thus avowed before his murderers. Theſe grave ſenators behoved to be affected deeply, by ſuch a charge and declaration from two illiterate

men. The author of that hiſtory informs us that they *marvelled*, and no wonder. All the compliment paid them was, that he whom they had lately murdered was raiſed from the dead. Had they had proof, now was the time effectually to have quaſhed them. Inſtead of this they ordain that the apoſtles withdraw, till they conſulted together. Such however was their confuſion, that they diſmiſſed them, by charging them to ſpeak no more in the name of Jeſus; the very thing that men would have done in any age, conſcious of guilt. The apoſtles however told them, they would not deſiſt: upon which they thought of a moſt effectual method to ſilence them, "they took counſel to kill them." A pretty way of anſwering arguments!

Theſe witneſſes could not be inſtigated to give ſuch a teſtimony from motives of worldly intereſt, but the very reverſe. A few men, who made no great appearance either in the literary or political world; they tell the Jews that they muſt give over their modes of worſhip, as theſe were ſuperceded by the appearance and work of him, whom they had lately hanged on a tree: this doctrine was not calculated to obtain the favour of the great; nay, they openly, in imitation of Chriſt, informed them, that if they eſpouſed chriſtianity, they muſt lay their account with perſecution in its moſt hideous forms; ſo that it was vain for men to adopt their tenets, unleſs

leſs they were willing to part with liberty, property and life itſelf. Now, could they be influenced by worldly conſiderations to give ſuch a teſtimony?—They could neither propoſe reputation, nor the enlargement of their fortunes; which, by the way, proves their ſincerity. Payne (in his Age of Reaſon, Part II.) aſſerts, "that with reſpect to ſuch books as compoſe the New Teſtament, all the inducements were on the ſide of forgery." But the dangers they encountered,—the ſufferings to which they were expoſed, will be ſufficient to ſhew, that the man who aſſerts this, muſt be obſtinately inclined to think and write juſt the reverſe of what the generality of men, poſſeſſed of *reaſon* and its exerciſe, will infer in a caſe of this kind. I would be glad to know what men could propoſe to themſelves in defending a cauſe to ſuch extremity, if bad.

It is granted, that men loſt to all ſenſe of virtue, may bid defiance to the dangers to which they may be expoſed in maintaining a bad cauſe, provided reputation or profit, real or ſuppoſed, is to be obtained by ſuch an obſtinate adherence, and even on this hypotheſis it is more likely that they would ſtop ſhort. I defy Payne, or any Deiſt, to produce an inſtance of a perſon in his wits, who threw away reputation and fortune to propagate an impoſture, which he confeſſed to be ſo. From this it will appear, that the witneſſes of Chriſt's reſurrection were

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not men of diſſolute morals;—The only queſtion that now remains then is, whether or not they were poſſeſſed of reaſon and its exerciſe.

To decide here, it is neceſſary to know, if their words and actions came up to the ſtandard of ſobriety, as commonly received among mankind. Did theſe men ever do or ſay any thing which betrayed a defect of intellectual powers? They expreſs their ſentiments with that gravity which became the importance of the ſubject; they converſed, taught, and argued with the moſt learned, as well as the vulgar. Why did not ſome of the learned Greeks and Romans diſcover ſome incoherence in their converſation?

When they argued, they either convinced their opponents; or elſe rouſed their indignation to ſuch a pitch, as proved they were reduced to the greateſt diſtreſs. And upon the whole, no man who is qualified as a judge of ſober ſenſe and capacity, could deny their qualifications to conduct themſelves as *men* and as miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt. They behaved themſelves with uniformity and conſiſtency.

Had the reſurrection of Chriſt been a fraud, why did not the Jews, who had it in their power, expoſe the impoſture? Why did they ſit with the heavy charge of bribing the ſoldiers? The writers of the New Teſtament openly declared the Jews did ſo, which, if true, militated greatly againſt them. This

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was repreſenting them in the moſt odious point of view.

Matthew records the matter thus; the watch who were ſet to guard the ſepulchre, being terrified by the earthquake and other circumſtances, came into the city and told what had taken place. Upon this a council was called; circumſtances were ſuch as required that the ſoldiers ſhould be ſilenced; and for this purpoſe, they reſolved to try the influence of money. They gave them the money, and told them what to ſay; "Say ye his diſciples ſtole him away while we ſlept." A very ſingular and contradictory direction; for if they were aſleep, how could they know who carried away the body?—Payne, in the depth of his new-coined reaſon, tries to make this circumſtance militate againſt the credibility of the hiſtory. This is ſuch a poor tale, that it deſerves no refutation; it is a very odd way of reaſoning, to make *that* militate againſt the hiſtorian, which the hiſtorian tells to expoſe the inconſiſtency of others. I agree with Payne, when he ſays, (Page 59, 60, 61.) "Were a perſon to tender his evidence about ſomething that he ſhould ſay was done, and of the manner of doing it, and of the perſon who did it, while he was aſleep, and could know nothing of the matter, ſuch evidence could not be received;" but to turn the fabrication of the Jews againſt the hiſtorian is abſurd in the extreme.

If the hiſtorians told a falſehood, why did not the Jews detect them? But, like Payne, they caſt dirt inſtead of argument. They ſlandered and reproached. They raiſed mobs, and endeavoured to inflame the minds of the common people againſt them.

If Chriſt did not riſe, what became of his body? If he did not riſe, the body muſt have been removed, either by friends or enemies. That it would not be by his foes, is pretty obvious; then it muſt have been taken away by his friends, as the Jews affirmed. As to this, a bare aſſertion will not do; chriſtians require proof. Let deiſts produce authentic records, or any moral evidence what became of the body; and any moral proof on this head will be of the higheſt advantage to the cauſe of infidelity; and Bible-believers will be ſatisfied, with moral or mathematical evidence, or any thing admiſſible. Chriſtians are willing to have the matter tried by this; but if infidels have no evidence but mere aſſertion to keep themſelves in countenance; the queſtion is, on which ſide does fraud and cheat reſt? Payne, on the reſurrection, talks of impoſtures and cheat, as if he could prove his dogmas by lines and figures, and after all he has nothing to ſay but conjecture and random affirmations which a man of reaſon cannot hear without contempt and indignation. If this be ſlander, deiſts are called upon to vindicate their own ſcheme.

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One would think, that the precaution of the Jews to prevent any impoſition, might ſatisfy any man if he was not under the influence of the moſt inveterate prejudice. The great men of the nation went to the governor, and told him that Jeſus had ſignified, while he was alive, that he would riſe again, and it would be neceſſary to ſeal the tomb, and place a guard. Their words, as recorded by Matthew in hiſtory, ſhew that they not only had full warning of the event, but likewiſe that they were aware from what quarter any cheat was to be expected, and the conſequences that would enſue, if any thing was left undone, which had a tendency to prevent it. They obtain a favourable anſwer from the governor; they are left to do every thing they thought neceſſary to prevent a fraud. "Pilate ſaid unto them, ye have a watch, go your way, make it as ſure as you can. So they went and made the ſepulchre ſure, ſealing the ſtone and ſetting a watch." Here every thing was to their wiſhes. The governor did not fruſtrate their deſign,—they had a guard of ſoldiers at their command; they had money, and they had malice. Theſe things leave no room to doubt the truth of Chriſt's reſurrection, and that by the power of God.

While theſe conſiderations have a dead weight on the Jews, they ſtrike againſt our Republican infidels with equal force. Could they have adopted any plan more effectual?

I have already ſhewn that if his body was ſtolen, it muſt have been by chriſtians. And how did this cheat come to be known? Did the diſciples tell it? Or the guard? Or were they conſcious of what paſſed in their ſleep? It is ſuch a poor tale as will not bear a hearing.

If Chriſt did not riſe, Thomas Payne muſt believe what is incredible by other men. He muſt believe that a few cheats overturned all the wiſdom of philoſophers, and craft of the politicians, in the age in which they lived, or he muſt conclude that this was effected by a few madmen. He muſt believe that a moſt aſtoniſhing event took place without means either human or divine. As for natural means, ſuch as worldly policy, or influence, money, &c. theſe men were poſſeſſed of none to carry on ſuch an impoſture. As for divine power, this muſt be out of the queſtion, for God could not countenance ſuch villains. Will any man believe, that a company of rude uncultivated men, could lay a plan ſo deep as never to be found out, eluding the vigilance of their moſt implacable enemies? Can any man believe, that human nature was in them ſpecifically different from what it is in other men,—without motives of honor or intereſt they ſhould run ſuch a riſque? Can a man believe, that ſuch vile impoſtors would teach ſuch an excellent ſyſtem of morality as they did? Thomas Payne, what ſhall be given thee, or what ſhall be done

done to thy falſe tongue! what ſhall be given thee for thine incredulity, abuſe, ſlander, and reproach. If you believe the above, which is the inevitable conſequence of infidelity, you believe what few men will. My ſoul, come not thou into his ſecrets.

But ſays Payne, (Part I. p. 7.) "The reſurrection and aſcenſion, ſuppoſing them to have taken place, admitted of public and ocular demonſtration, like that of the aſcenſion of a balloon, or the ſun at noon-day, to all Jeruſalem at leaſt. A thing which every body is required to believe, requires that the proof and evidence of it ſhould be equal to all and univerſal; and as the public viſibility of this laſt related act was the only evidence that could give ſanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground, becauſe that evidence never was given, &c." Part II. p. 61. "It is directly repugnant to the ſuppoſed or pretended end, and that of convincing the world that Chriſt was riſen; and on the other hand to have aſſerted the publicity of it, would have expoſed the writers of thoſe books to public detection, and therefore they have been under the neceſſity of making it a private affair, &c." And near the foot of p. 61, and in p. 62. he ſays, "I now come to the laſt ſcene, that of the aſcenſion into heaven. Here all fear of the Jews and of every other thing elſe, muſt neceſſarily have been out of the queſtion; it was that which, if true, was to ſeal the

the whole, and upon which the reality of the future miſſion of the diſciples was to reſt for proof. Words, whether declarations, or promiſes that paſſed in private, either in the receſs of a mountain in Galilee, or in a ſhut-up houſe in Jeruſalem, even ſuppoſing them to have been ſpoken, could not be evidence in public; it was therefore neceſſary that this laſt ſcene ſhould preclude the poſſibility of denial and diſpute; and that it ſhould be as I have ſtated in the former part of the *Age of Reaſon*, as public and as viſible as the ſun at noon-day; at leaſt it ought to have been as public, as the crucifixion is reported to have been." Let us now ſhortly examine this ſilly tale twice told. The Jews propoſed an experiment ſimilar to this, when our Lord was on the croſs; "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the croſs." They ſaid they would believe if he would publicly deliver himſelf. Well, Deiſts profeſs much the ſame thing; had Chriſt ſhewn himſelf publicly after his reſurrection, this would have ſatisfied them,—they would have depended in this caſe, on the evidence of men, precarious as they affirm it is. But this at once ſhews the weakneſs of their ſcheme, or the inſincerity of their hearts, or both; for the belief of this great article of chriſtianity, muſt have been founded on the ſame moral evidence that it is at this day, —recourſe muſt have been had to the ſame kind of proof, which they affect to deſpiſe as inſufficient.

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If they run down and ridicule all evidence, except mathematical, how is it poſſible for them to conſider it ſufficient in this caſe? *A double minded man is unſtable in all his ways.* But ſays Payne, "ſuch a public appearance was neceſſary, at his reſurrection and aſcenſion *to all Jeruſalem at leaſt.*" Well ſaid; but how could you have known (Thomas Payne) that he did thus appear? How could you be ſure ſeventeen hundred years after this? How could you have ſatisfied yourſelf that it was ſo? You muſt have done the very ſame thing, that muſt be done in preſent circumſtances, namely, try the evidence if it has the marks of rational belief; for evidence of the ſame kind, and communicated in the ſame manner, muſt ever produce the ſame effect; and of courſe all your talk is but a ſilly jeſt.

You affect to laugh to ſcorn the miracles of Chriſt, as tricts and forgeries, though they were performed in the moſt public manner, and ſtand upon evidence, far ſuperior to that evidence upon which you profeſs to credit other facts that have taken place. "But to come to the point" with Payne. The caſe about which we argue here is a matter of fact;—a thing in its own nature incapable of mathematical demonſtration, a kind of proof which will not be required in ſuch circumſtances, unleſs by fools and madmen, or perſons groſsly ignorant of the true nature of evidence.

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With reſpect to ſenſible proof, it is admitted, that a matter of fact may be thus proven, to ſuch as lived at the time the fact happened; but it is the greateſt nonſenſe and contradiction, for men who live ages after, to ſpeak of ſenſible proof of ſuch matter of fact, and of courſe ſenſible proof muſt be for ever excluded in all ſimilar caſes. By what rule or means is a man convinced of the truth of things which do not admit of ocular or ſenſible proof? On the ſame evidence as to kind, though more forcible, Chriſtians believe the reſurrection and aſcenſion of Jeſus Chriſt.

SECT. IV.

The Moſaic account of the Creation, conſiſtent with Natural Philoſophy.

PAYNE, like the monkey for want of poſteriors cannot reſt, flies from one thing to another. He muſt needs let the world know that he is a philoſopher: his vanity is almoſt boundleſs. (Part I. p. 34. Age of Reaſon.) "I proceed in addition to the ſeveral obſervations already made in the former part of this work, to compare or rather to confront the evidence that the ſtructure of the univerſe affords, with the Chriſtian ſyſtem of religion. But I cannot

not begin this part better than by referring to the ideas that occurred to me at an early part of life, &c." The vain glorious creature would make his own ideas a ſtandard to other men. Having given us an account of his philoſophical creed, he roundly aſſerts that " the creation is the only word of God; and that to believe a plurality of worlds *(in effect)* renders the Chriſtian ſyſtem of faith, at once little and ridiculous, and ſcatters it in the mind like feathers in the air."

His deſign evidently is, to repreſent the Chriſtian religion as inconſiſtent with the principles of philoſophy. Yes, Thomas Payne *is the man, and true philoſophy will die with him!* He wiſhes to repreſent Chriſtian Clergy, as only engaged in the uſeleſs ſtudy of the dead languages,—that they, with the whole fraternity of Bible-believers know nothing but the A, B, C, or that two and three make five,—as ignorant of natural philoſophy, &c. But why all this parade,—this pretended learning, as if Chriſtian Prieſts did not know as much as Payne!

I am by no means inclined to intrude on the public with philoſophical diſquiſitions, yet to wipe away the reproach from Chriſtians, I ſhall give a ſummary view of the account of the creation of all things as revealed in the ſcriptures; by which the world will judge whether Bible believers credit any thing as abſurd, and whether the Scriptures be inconſiſtent

conſiſtent with the principles of ſound philoſophy or not.

Creation denotes the production of all things out of nothing. Creation is two-fold, *primary* and *ſecondary;* or immediate and mediate. The one ſignifies the production of ſomething out of nothing, the other the formation of a material being out of pre-exiſtent matter, but that matter ſo indiſpoſed, that he who produced the matter alone can form ſuch a creature out of it. The firſt chapter of Geneſis affords us an exemplification of this twofold creation. According to that hiſtory, God Almighty on the firſt of the ſix days, produced that vaſt maſs of matter out of nothing, out of which he formed all the ſeveral ſpecies of material creatures on the ſubſequent days.

The introduction to the account given of creation in that hiſtory, divides it into two parts, the *heavens* and the *earth*. It admits of heavens in the plural number; theſe are commonly diſtributed into *aereal*, *ætherial*, and *empyrean*. There is *earth* as well the *heavens*. The earth is but a very inconſiderable part of the creation. It is commonly denominated the terraqueous globe; a *globe* on account of its oval form, and terraqueous, as conſiſting partly of earth and partly of water. The writer of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews calls this *worlds*. The univerſe conſiſts of worlds heaped upon worlds, unnumber-

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ed and unknown. By creation in the book of Geneſis is intended the vaſt univerſe, known and unknown. Paſſing the *hypotheſes*, maintained by the Pagan Philoſophers, Peripatetics, Epicureans, Carteſians, Chineſe, Chaldeans and others; I ſhall follow the hiſtorical account in the book of Geneſis.

On the *firſt* day God made the *heavens*, and the *earth*, and the *light*.

1ſt. The *heavens*. As we noticed, this includes the aereal heavens. By this is meant, that collection or body of air, which to a conſiderable height encircles the earth, the chief qualities of which are *fluidity*, *gravity*, and *elaſticity*. In it we breathe, alternately drawing it in and forcing it out by the action of the lungs. It is known to geographers by the name of the atmoſphere. The real height of it is generally ſuppoſed to extend 50 miles from the ſurface of the earth.

There is the *æthereal* or ſtarry heavens, ſo denominated, as comprehending that vaſt region in which the heavenly luminaries are ranged, and perform their periodical revolutions. The *Empyrean* is uſed to point out the glorious reſidence of the Lord of the univerſe.

2. The *earth*. By this Chriſtians intend that part of the vaſt univerſe, deſtined to be the temporary reſidence of man. It is an opaque body, deriving its light from the ſun. It is of a round, or rather

oval form. Of its internal parts we are in a great meaſure unacquainted. Our earth is one of the primary planets, and moves round its axis, once in 24 hours, and round the ſun in a year.

3. The *light*. According to the hiſtory in Geneſis, what we call the heavenly luminaries were not created till the fourth day. Says Payne, (Part II. page 82.) "The knowledge of the heavenly bodies is from the Bible of the creation, and not from the ſtupid Bible of the church, which teaches man nothing. The Bible-makers have undertaken to give us, in the firſt chapter of Geneſis, an account of the creation; and in doing this, they have demonſtrated nothing but their ignorance. They make there to have been three days and three nights, evenings and mornings, before there was a ſun, &c." By light made on that day, is meant the vaſt numbers and variety of luminous particles, which, on the fourth day were collected, and formed theſe bodies of light which we call the heavenly luminaries. Though it is admitted that the ſun meaſures time, yet that body is not time itſelf, as contradiſtinguiſhed from eternity. Before the exiſtence of creatures all was eternity, and time commenced whenever creatures exiſted; and before the ſun there was a period of time equal to the days mentioned, had that period been meaſured by the ſun.

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The works of the *ſecond* day were two; the *firmament*, and the diviſion of the waters under, from thoſe above it.

1. The *firmament*, or *expanſe*, as the word means. By this may be underſtood the aerial, or the aerial and æthereal heavens. Nor is this an unneceſſary repetition. The heavens mentioned on the firſt day may mean the production of the materials, whereas on the ſecond day they might be arranged as we now behold them. A

2d Work of this day was the *diviſion* of the waters which were under the firmament, from the waters which were above it. By the waters under the firmament, is intended the waters contained in the ſeas, rivers, lakes, and bowels of the earth. With regard to the waters above the firmament, the hiſtorian intends either the great bodies of waters contained, or at leaſt ſuppoſed to be contained, in the other planets. And all this on the *hypotheſis*, that, antecedent to this diviſion, all the waters of the ſeveral planets were jumbled together, and that on this day, the quantity of water belonging to each world was allotted to it. Or it means, that on this day the air was ſo attempered, as to diſtinguiſh between the waters in the ſeas, lakes, &c. and the aqueous particles carried about in the meteors and clouds which ſwim in the higher regions of the atmoſphere.

The works of the third day were the *collection* of the waters under the firmament, and the *infuſion* of a principle of vegetation into the earth.

1ſt, On this day the waters under the firmament were collected into receptacles that were prepared for them, and thus there was a ſeparation between the ſea and the dry land. Previous to this work, our earth was without hills or vallies; and on this day, the Great Creator, either immediately, or by ſomething ſimilar to ſubterraneous thunder, ſo agitated the earth, as to raiſe one part and ſink another. Thus he ſeparated the ſea from the dry land.

2d, On this day he *infuſed* into the earth the power of vegetation, ſo as it might produce the different ſpecies of plants, trees, &c.

On the *fourth* day the heavenly bodies were formed; the *ſun*, *moon*, and ſtars.

1ſt, The *ſun*. This vaſt body, which is the ſource of light and heat to our part of the great univerſe, —and the fixed ſtars are underſtood to be immenſe collections of inflamed matter, the heat of which is preſerved by their amazing magnitude, their mutual action and re-action, and the rays they emit. The ſun remains, and is preſerved from fuming away by the fixity of the component parts, and by the vaſt weight and denſity of the atmoſphere incumbent on theſe parts. The ſun is of vaſt magnitude, and at an immenſe diſtance from the earth.

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2d. The *moon*. This is one of the planets, which derives its heat from the ſun.

3d. On this day the Glorious Creator made the ſtars. Theſe have been called fixed or wandering. Each of the former is ſuppoſed to be a ſun, enlightening and otherwiſe influencing planetary bodies. The wandering are ſo denominated, not only becauſe they move round the ſtar, which is the center of the ſyſtem to which they belong; but becauſe they change their poſition with regard to the fixed ſtars. Planets are primary and ſecondary. Comets are eccentric bodies, and in their motions are quite irregular.

On the fifth day, He made the fowls of the air, and the fiſhes of the ſea.

On the ſixth day, He made the beaſts of the earth, and created man. In this account is there any thing abſurd or unphiloſophical?

But, ſays Payne, "theſe are the only Bible, the only word of God, they ſpeak to us." That they ſpeak to us, who ever denied. In a book which chriſtians believe, ſpeech is aſcribed to God's works. "*The heavens declare the glory of God, their voice is gone into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.—The works of God are calculated to beget awe of him,—his eternal power and Godhead are clearly ſeen by the things that are made:* But that creation is the only word of God is a mere aſſertion, and he ſhould

ſhould have firſt proven that it was unneceſſary to have any other.

He palms upon Chriſtians that they believe the world to be flat like a *Trencher*,—that they cannot believe there are any worlds but one. Why might not this ſlander have been uttered at firſt? The reaſon is obvious, he has been eager to let the world know that he has a little ſmatter of experimental philoſophy. Says he, (Part I. Page 42.) "In the midſt of theſe reflections, what are we to think of the Chriſtian ſyſtem of faith, that forms itſelf upon the idea of only one world, &c. From whence could ariſe the ſolitary and ſtrange conceit that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equally dependent on his protection, ſhould quit the care of all the reſt, and come to die in our world, becauſe they ſay, one man and one woman had eaten an apple. And, on the other hand, are we to ſuppoſe that every world in the boundleſs creation, had an Eve, an apple, a ſerpent, and a Redeemer. In this caſe, the perſon who is irreverently called the Son of God, and ſometimes God himſelf, would have nothing elſe to do than travel from world to world, in an endleſs ſucceſſion of death, with ſcarcely a momentary interval of life."

It is one thing to aſſert, and another to prove, that it is, and muſt be a part of the Chriſtian faith, that there is only one world. Is it not written,

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" the worlds were framed by the word of God." He talks at random, when he ſpeaks of the reſt of the worlds having an Eve, a ſerpent, &c. Is he ſure that theſe worlds are inhabited?—that they are inhabited by men, ſuch as we are? Where is his proof? Is he ſure of it? Has he had ocular demonſtration? Where is the evidence? Was Payne in any of them? Has he viſited them all? Has he a regular correſpondence with all theſe worlds? Did he receive information from others? Who were they? What was their occupation? Were they fiſhers or ſtaymakers?—Theſe queſtions muſt be anſwered before his clamour can affect Chriſtianity on that head. To believe that there are a vaſt variety of worlds repleniſhed with inhabitants, is quite harmleſs in itſelf. But from the poſſibility thereof, to defame any ſyſtem of religion in ſuch dogmatical terms, deſerves the moſt pointed cenſure.

SECT. V.

Of Myſtery, Miracle, and Prophecy.

IN Part I. Page 35, 36. he narrates a part of his religious experience. " From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea, I either doubted the truth of the Chriſtian ſyſtem, or thought it to be a ſtrange affair;

affair; I ſcarcely knew which it was; but I well remember when about ſeven or eight years of age, hearing a ſermon read by a relation, who was a great devotee to the church, upon the ſubject of what is called *redemption by the death of the Son of God.* After the ſermon was ended, I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden ſteps (for I perfectly recollect the ſpot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myſelf that it was like making God Almighty act like a paſſionate man, that killed his Son when he could not revenge himſelf any other way; and as I was ſure a man would be hanged that did ſuch a thing, I could not ſee for what purpoſe they preached ſuch ſermons."

A childiſh ſtory when told, and ſtuffed with ſelf-conceit; a pretty ſtory that he ſhould paſs a deciſion on religion at ſeven or eight years of age! It is likely he has never been freed from the trambles of puerile prejudice *until this day.* And he muſt ſpeak for the whole world! All men muſt ſay amen to his ſentiments, and theſe of a child too! Nothing can be true, except this pitiful *egotiſt* can comprehend it. It muſt be unjuſt in God to puniſh his own Son,—as if the divine conduct was to be meaſured by his ſtandard. It would be unlawful, indeed, for one man to die for another; but if Jeſus Chriſt be God, as Chriſtians have proven, he was amenable to none but

but himſelf, he had his life at his diſpoſal, which no mere man has.

MYSTERY.

(Age of Reaſon, Part I. p. 43.) "I proceed to ſpeak of the means that have been employed in all ages, and perhaps in all countries, to impoſe upon mankind. Thoſe three means are, Myſtery, Miracle, and Prophecy. The two firſt are incompatible with true religion, and the third ought always to be ſuſpected.

"With reſpect to myſtery, every thing we behold is, in one ſenſe a myſtery to us. Our own exiſtence is a myſtery, the whole vegetable world is a myſtery, &c." (Page 44.) "The fact, however, as diſtinct from the operating cauſe, is not a myſtery, becauſe we ſee it, and we know the means we are to uſe, &c. But though every created thing is in this ſenſe a myſtery, the word myſtery cannot be applied to moral truth, any more than obſcurity can be applied to light. The god in whom we believe is a god of moral truth. Myſtery is the antagoniſt of truth, &c.

"When men, whether from policy or religious fraud, ſet up ſyſtems of religion, incompatible with the word or works of God in the creation, and not only above, but repugnant to human comprehenſion, they were under the neceſſity of inventing or

adopting a word that ſhould ſerve as a bar to all queſtions, enquiries and ſpeculations, and thus it has happened, that religion, which in itſelf is without myſtery, has been corrupted into a fog of myſtery."

This legitimate offſpring of emptineſs and vanity, lays a heavy charge to the chriſtian world for believing myſtery; or believing tenets, to the full comprehenſion of which the human mind is confeſſedly inadequate. In anſwer to this, it is not neceſſary to enter into a minute inveſtigation of principles. To repel the force of the accuſation, it may be proper to advert to two obſervations. Firſt reſpecting the meaning of the term myſtery; ſecond, with regard to the evidence by which doctrines are ſupported, which fall under the denomination of myſtery. Myſterious is an appellation given with propriety to any doctrine or tranſaction, the nature and manner of which we cannot completely underſtand. But if we were to reject every hypotheſis, as incredible, to which ſuch objections may be made, namely; that we cannot fully underſtand their nature and manner of operation, the ſphere of enquiry would be ſmall indeed. Payne, it is true, admits that "in one ſenſe every thing is a myſtery," which is referred to certain eſtabliſhed laws, of which the effect and ſtability are confirmed by experience; whereas, in myſteries of chriſtianity, we

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can form no idea of the means which could be employed to bring them about. But many examples might be adduced in which our confeſſed ignorance of means forms no objection againſt their end, though this end be not expoſed to ſenſible cogniſance. The argument at laſt muſt come to this, what proof is equal to an end, that does not come within the compaſs of experience; or ſenſible cogniſance? The natural anſwer is, theſe myſterious tenets which Chriſtians believe derive their authority from revelation. The proof, of courſe, by which the truth of theſe tenets is eſtabliſhed, muſt be inferred from the character, actions, and other circumſtances of the perſon by whom ſuch myſteries are revealed, and particularly from the tendency of his other inſtitutions. In the preſent inſtance we muſt recur to the prophecies which anounced the birth and actions of Chriſt; to the miracles which he performed; to his moral conduct, in every circumſtance irreproachable; and to the tenor of his inſtitutions as calculated to promote the beſt intereſts of men. By the concurrence of theſe things, a poſſible circumſtance becomes the object of rational belief, founded not upon impreſſion, but on argument. Allowing chriſtianity be out of the queſtion, theſe there are the very things which every reaſonable man wiſhes to concentrate in the author of a revelation from God, and if it can be proven, that theſe

centered in the author of chriſtianity, brings an evidence of its divinity, adapted to the nature of the ſubject. That this is the caſe with reſpect to chriſtianity, will appear from what has been obſerved on the nature of moral evidence, and as to miracles, we ſhall ſpeak of them by and by; in the mean time, myſtery and miracle are of the ſame nature, according to Payne's own conceſſions. To every accuſation of this kind, where there is a determination by impreſſion, the reply is, our faith is ſo far a rational principle as it is determined by evidence, and that after an impartial inveſtigation. Theſe doctrines of chriſtianity which are not on a level with our underſtandings, (as ſome others are,) we are induced to conſider as worthy of credibility; for this plain and obvious reaſon, namely, a doctrine which a perſon might reject as improbable, viewed by itſelf; viewed as a component part of the general ſyſtem, may be received with gratitude and confidence, as the general ſyſtem is calculated to promote the ends of general utility. It forms in the mind a part of a whole, of which he finds himſelf obliged to own the divine original. I have mentioned theſe things with a view to overthrow Payne's ſtrongeſt allegations reſpecting myſtery, viz. an invidious and ill-founded diſtinction between *Reaſon* and *Belief*. It may be ſaid, there are certain moral precepts which we comprehend, and

and we are convinced of their fitneſs. But are we on that account to adopt maxims which we do not underſtand, into our ſyſtem of principles? To this we anſwer, the proof which demonſtrates chriſtian tenets as calculated to promote the honour of the Supreme Being, and the intereſts of men; is as direct and ſtrictly philoſophical as any evidence can be. The belief and conviction of a chriſtian in this caſe, is equal to a conviction and belief eſtabliſhed by philoſophical inveſtigation.

MIRACLE.

Says Payne, "As Myſtery anſwered all general purpoſes, *Miracle* followed as an occaſional auxiliary. The former ſerved to bewilder the mind, the latter to puzzle the ſenſes. The one was the lingo, the other the legerdemain." He then goes on to deſcribe myſtery as the ſame with miracle, and yet he confeſſes, that "there is nothing in this deſcription that conveys the idea that is affixed to the word miracle;" which, by the way, overthrows all he had ſaid of myſtery, for myſtery and miracle are "the ſame;" and yet they are not the ſame according to his definition of miracle: and he adds, "it is unneceſſary to carry the enquiry further." In as far then as myſtery and miracle are the ſame, the anſwer to what he advances reſpecting myſtery, muſt apply to miracle.

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He goes on to tell us that " mankind have conceived to themſelves certain laws, by which, what they call nature is ſuppoſed to act; and that a miracle is ſomething contrary to the operation and effect of thoſe laws."

The truth of miracles, or a ſuſpenſion of the laws of nature, and their credibility, will in ſo far appear from what has been ſtated concerning myſtery. Thoſe who ſet up in oppoſition to the miracles performed by Moſes and Meſſiah, evidently allowed the *fact* of them, by their attempts to match them. To deny the truth of miracles, becauſe they cannot be accounted for according to the principles of the laws of nature; is in effect to baniſh the Supreme Being from the moral and material world, as if the world was ſuch as a clock. This is to make the works of the Supreme Being, in their operation indepedent of their great author; and is a denial of an all-wiſe and ſuperintending providence.

The miracles performed by Moſes and Jeſus Chriſt were performed publicly, while friends and foes, natives and foreigners, the learned and the unlearned, beheld and were aſtoniſhed.

Yes, ſays Payne, but all this was " *legerdemain.*" There can be no ſecurity againſt aſſertion and ſurmiſe. When a man pretends to reaſon, he ought to conſider himſelf under ſome laws and rules; but when he takes occaſion to ſurmiſe, where there is

no ground, the reaſonable part of mankind will conſider him fitter for bedlam than to be argued with.

Will Thomas Payne believe,—that perſons affected with burning fevers and corroding ulcers could be tricked into perfect health by mere *legerdemain?* —will he believe that blind men will ſee, lepers be cleanſed, and the dead raiſed to life, by mere fancy? or that great multitudes could be ſo far impoſed upon as to believe, that they ſaw, heard, ate and drank repeatedly, in different places, while no ſuch things took place? If theſe things are poſſible, what are our external ſenſes good for? Or can we ever depend upon them? No, we cannot believe a Deiſt when he talks about being convinced by ſenſe, for according to this hypotheſis we cannot believe our own ſenſes.

It is true, in a caſe which required nice reaſoning, there might be ſome pretext, but when it comes to eating and drinking, if men cannot make uſe of their eyes and taſte, we had better want both.

A man muſt come to one of the following concluſions: either that the account we have of the miracles of Jeſus Chriſt was falſe, and only reported by ſome who had a deſign to deceive,—or that he wrought no miracles; but merely deluded the ſenſes of mankind,—or that the ſpectators knew that he wrought no miracles, and thus were not impoſed upon; but that they all, *friends* and foes, united in

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a confederacy, to make the world believe that he did perform miracles, while he did no ſuch thing,—or that he performed the miracles which Chriſtians ſay he did. It is preſumed that he will find it a hard taſk to prove, either that the whole was a trick,—that multitudes in ſuch circumſtances were impoſed upon,—or that ſuch a confederacy could poſſibly take place.

With regard to myſtery and miracle, I charge Payne with the moſt wretched bigotry; for "Man learns the theory of religion by reflection. It ariſes out of the action of his own mind, upon the things which he ſees, or upon what he may happen to hear or to read; and the practice joins itſelf thereto." (Part I. p. 44, 45.) "The whole vegetable world is a myſtery." (Ibid. p. 43.) This is the higheſt degree of obſtinacy and credulity, to ſtand ſo obſtinately by a thing about which he cannot ſolve the leaſt difficulty.

No ſays he, for "the acorn, when put into the ground, is made to develope itſelf, and become an oak. We know not how it is that the ſeed we ſow unfolds and multiplies itſelf, and returns to ſuch an abundant intereſt for ſo ſmall a capital."

"The fact, however, as diſtinct from the operating cauſe, is not a myſtery becauſe we ſee it; and we know alſo the means we are to uſe, which is no other than putting the ſeed into the ground. We come

know therefore as much as is neceſſary for us to know, and which, if we did, we could not perform, the Great Creator takes upon himſelf, and performs it for us. We are therefore better off than if we had been let into the ſecret, and left to do it for ourſelves." One would think at firſt ſight this very concluſive. It ſeems to leave a man under the neceſſity of admitting, that though in things which are the objects of ſenſe we overlook difficulties, which cannot be reſolved; yet in other things inſuperable difficulties may be ſufficient ground to reject them, particularly, myſteries and miracles in queſtion, and it would appear the greateſt credulity to believe them upon the evidence offered for their ſupport. If this be not the meaning, it can have none. But if inſuperable difficulties be not ſufficient for calling in queſtion ſome things, for which we have all the evidence that the nature of theſe things admit of; then I was right in ſaying that the difference of things in their own nature, neceſſarily infer a difference in the mode of proof, and by virtue of the conſtitution of things, we are bound to aſſent to things as true, upon mere moral proof, as well as aſſent to the teſtimony of our ſenſes; unleſs we admit of what ſome have pled for, viz. a deluſive ſenſe, which is inconſiſtent with the infinite perfection of God. Moreover, ſuch a deluſive ſcheme is equally impoſſible in a caſe that admits of mo-

ral proof, as in any inſtance of mathematical demonſtration. It muſt follow, that all Payne's talk about the inconſiſtency of miracle is merely great ſwelling words of vanity. The ſtreſs lies on evidence and not on intricacies.

It is further urged againſt miracle by Payne, (Age of Reaſon, Part I. p. 45.) "Mankind have conceived to themſelves certain laws by which, what they call nature is ſuppoſed to act; and that a miracle is ſomething contrary to the operation and effect of thoſe laws. But unleſs we know the whole extent of thoſe laws, and of what are commonly called the powers of nature, we are not able to judge whether any thing that may appear to us wonderful or miraculous, be within, or beyond, or be contrary to her natural power of acting." It will be neceſſary here carefully to attend to what has been ſaid reſpecting the nature of evidence, and to what has been already ſtated on myſtery and miracle.

In order to repel the objection, let it be obſerved, that though many have been impoſed upon, and though a man may not, at all times and in all caſes, know when he is ſo, it will not thence follow that he muſt always be deceived; nor will it follow, that in certain caſes, he can never be ſure that he is not impoſed upon.

Let an example illuſtrate this. Though a man may not know the utmoſt extent of the power of fire,

fire, yet he may know that it belongs to its nature to burn, and that, when fuel is caſt into it, if it does not conſume the ſame, there muſt be a ſuſpenſion of the laws of nature. If I ſaw a man apprehended publicly, and without any operation performed on him, but in his every day's clothes, thrown into a fiery furnace, the flames of which raged with awful fury, ſo as to kill the officers who threw him into the fire; and yet the perſon who had been apprehended and caſt into it, walked at the bottom of the furnace without harm, or the ſmell of fire about his clothes; in theſe circumſtances, I could not be deceived in drawing this concluſion, viz. that there had been a ſuſpenſion of the laws of nature in relation to the power of fire on that man; and that it had operated in a natural way on the perſons whom it had conſumed when they threw the man into the fiery furnace. In like manner, though I do not know how "an acorn becomes an oak," neither can I tell how amazing an increaſe there may be of corn by a concurrence of natural cauſes, ſuch as ariſe from climate, ſoil, &c yet I certainly know that there can be no natural efficacy in uttering a few words, to increaſe one ſmall loaf of bread, ſo faſt; in the breaking; *really* not in appearance only, but to ſatisfy the appetite of thouſands of hungry perſons; and that the fragments ſhould be more than the bread was at firſt. *

* See *Short and Eaſy Method, &c.*

With regard to the New Teſtament, the facts, as we have ſeen, were done openly, nor is it poſſible that legerdemain would remove fevers, &c. There are alſo memorials which have been obſerved from that day to this. The clergy (however odious to Payne) are a laſting proof of the truth of Chriſtianity; for if the goſpel be an invention of prieſts, there could have been no ſuch order of men when firſt invented; which would have given the lie to the goſpel, as it ſtates that ſuch an order of men obtained from its firſt erection, (as the hiſtory itſelf declares,) and the things ſaid to be true, only as they obtained at the time; (whatever period the goſpel is ſuppoſed to have been forged) can their reception be before their invention?

Thomas Payne requires ſuperior proof; here it is; and I defy him and all the infidel tribe to condeſcend on any religion which is fabulous, that has ſuch evidence as Chriſtianity. I do not affirm that every thing is falſe that has not this evidence; but it is impoſſible that any thing can be falſe, that is ſo ſupported. If the Bible be the invention of men, they muſt have been either good or bad, either virtuous or vicious: now, it cannot be the invention of bad men; men of ſuch a deſcription would never have invented a ſyſtem diametrically oppoſite to their own luſts and temporal intereſts, as might be ſhewn at large: neither can it be an invention of

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good men, ſeeing they muſt have been conſcious of the fraud; and a fraud and perſeverance in it is inconſiſtent with the character of ſuch.

If it be, as he ſays, the invention of prieſts, this gives the world an idea of that order of men far ſuperior to what they themſelves ever thought; if this be the fact, inſtead of their knowing only *hic*, *hæc*, *hoc*; they muſt be the moſt artful and intelligent of of the human race, if they could ſo far impoſe upon the ſenſes of their fellow creatures, they muſt be poſſeſſed of power more than human:—This is more wonderful than all the miracles mentioned in the Bible. And ſeeing prieſts have been able to maintain ſuch an impoſture, Payne ought to yield to that very prieſthood which he affects to deſpiſe; to avoid a mortification ſo gravelling as bow to prieſts, he ought candidly to confeſs his error and ignorance, —and ſubmit to the truth of revealed religion. I am, however, afraid his neck is compoſed of an iron ſinew, and his brow of braſs; Solomon's proverb, I fear, will be verified in the inſtance of this malicious infidel, "bray a fool in a mortar with a peſtle, yet will not his folly depart from him."

Thoſe who were firſt employed in preaching the Chriſtian ſyſtem, were inſpired with courage to publiſh theſe doctrines to the world: they witneſſed the facts which related to the life and doctrines of Chriſt, and therefore their evidence muſt have weight with

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all who will not ſervilely proſtitute their reaſon to the moſt ſcandalous incredulity, more eſpecially as they were perſons of truth and integrity, and as we have ſeen they witneſſed facts which came within the reach of their external ſenſes.

They declared theſe at the time when, and in the place where they were tranſacted, and that openly before their moſt inveterate enemies; who had every advantage, and a great inclination to detect the fraud, if there had been any. They had no worldly intereſts to promote by the publication of theſe things,—expoſed themſelves to the fury and rage of their enemies and perſecutors. While men have a principle of ſelf-preſervation, they cannot be ſuppoſed to publiſh theſe doctrines at ſuch a riſque, if their minds had not been fortified by ſupernatural power. It is true, that pride and bigotry have prompted ſome men to die martyrs to atheiſm, but ſuch generally ended their days ſullen and mad, reviling ſuch as put them to death; whereas ſuch as died to ſeal the truth of Chriſtianity, pitied and prayed for their enemies. I allow, that, merely to die in the defence of a cauſe is no proof of the truth of it; more than Payne's believing that revealed religion was a mere impoſition, when he had death, by the bloody hand of Robeſpierre, in near proſpect, can prove the truth of deiſm. It will prove obſtinacy, but not that his principles were juſt. Beſides, he

was

was not dying for infidelity; whereas in the inſtance of Chriſtian martyrs, all circumſtances conſidered, had they not died to ſupport the truth; human nature muſt have been very different *then*, from what it is *now*.

They ſupported their tenets by miracles, which could not be *tricks*, for the jugglers at that time, at leaſt ſome of them, owned, that the power of God attended them. Jugglers always aim at gain and reputation, whereas the apoſtles had only bonds and impriſonments in view.

The miracles which they performed might eaſily be known as to the fact of them. Perſons who lived at the time when, and place where, they were performed, had acceſs to know, whether or not ſome of their neighbours had been born blind, and had obtained their ſight by theſe men;—whether or not any of them had been deaf, dumb, and lame, and had obtained the uſe of the organs of ſpeech, and of their limbs,—and whether any of their acquaintances had been dead, and had been raiſed to life again: theſe things, if true, muſt have been known; and, if falſe, there were men very ready to detect the cheat.

It cannot be pretended, that our Saviour and his apoſtles knew ſome ſecrets in nature, with which the world are unacquainted; for though things of this kind may amuſe mankind, the miracles of our

Saviour,

Saviour and his apoſtles, from their uſefulneſs and variety, prove that they were not limited to a few ſecrets of the laws of nature, which work always one way; they were moſt beneficial to mankind. It cannot with truth be affirmed, that imagination, however powerfully it may work, would make them fancy that ſuch things took place without being real; for though a hypocondriacal perſon may be deceived, yet numbers could not be impoſed upon at one and the ſame time. They were of a nature too ſingular to be miſtaken, ſuch as making the blind to ſee by a word; changing the ſtorm into a calm by a rebuke; and though, in ſome diſeaſes, which ly in high fermentations of the blood, &c. fancy may operate to cure, yet chronical diſorders and natural defects like blindneſs and lameneſs, cannot be carried off by the power of imagination.

Part I. p. 47. he ſays, "We have never ſeen, in our time, nature go out of her courſe, but we have reaſon to believe that millions of lies have been told in the ſame time, &c." If this has an any meaning at all, it implies, that there ought to be a continuation of miracles. To this it is anſwered, that we have no right to cenſure the ways of the Supreme Being. Beſides, if there was a continuation of them, it would defeat their end, men would daily become accuſtomed to this kind of evidence; and they would ſoon ceaſe to impreſs us. A continuation

ation of miracles would lead men to call the divine power into queſtion. They would be ready to impute them to ſome natural though unknown cauſe. And if men will not believe what is written, they would not believe the moſt uncontеſted miracle that might be performed for their conviction, more than many who believed not though they witneſſed miracles performed by Moſes, Meſſiah and his Miſſionaries. Thus much for myſtery and miracle.

PROPHECY.

" Prophecy ought always to be ſuſpected. (Part I. p. 43.) As myſtery and miracle took charge of the paſt and the preſent, prophecy took charge of the future, and rounded the tenſes of faith. If there were," (meaning prophets) " it is conſiſtent to believe, that the event ſo communicated, would be told in terms that could be underſtood; and not related in ſuch a looſe and obſcure manner as to be out of the comprehenſion of thoſe that heard it, and ſo equivocal as to fit almoſt any circumſtance that might happen afterwards. It is conceiving very irreverently of the Almighty to ſuppoſe he would deal in this jeſting manner with mankind: yet all the things called prophecies in the book called the Bible, come under this deſcription." (Part I. p. 48, 49.) " It is upon the pretended prophecies,

that the theory of the church, calling itſelf the Chriſtian Church, is founded." (Part II. p. 74.)

It is admitted that there are ſome dark prophecies, but they are not all of this complexion. Let us attend to the exact accompliſhment of predictions concerning the moſt contingent events; they may be called contingent, becauſe their accompliſhment depends not on ſecond cauſes, and of courſe cannot be accounted for by the laws of nature. The knowledge of the laws of nature, enables naturaliſts to deſcribe and foretel events, that depend on theſe laws which are regular in their operations. For example, the tranſit of a planet paſſing by a fixed ſtar,—an eclipſe of the ſun effected by the moon's intervening between the ſun and our earth; or an eclipſe of the moon by the intervenſion of our atmoſphere between the ſun and the moon,—the alternate ebbing and flowing of the ſea, and ſimilar events, which may be predicted for ages to come. But the ſcripture prophets foretel events of the moſt caſual and fortuitous kind, and of which no man can have any previous knowledge from the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, and that long ere they happened.

A very few references will illuſtrate this. Hundreds of years before Joſiah was born, it was foretold, that he by name, ſhould burn the bones of the idolatrous prieſts, whom Jeroboam had employed, and that this ſhould be done at Bethel. Could the

fatal

fatal death of Ahab and Jezebel been more circumſtantially deſcribed, by one who was to write the hiſtory, than prophecy foretold, with regard to dogs eating the fleſh of the one, and licking the blood of the other. The return from the Babyloniſh captivity was not only predicted long before, but the perſon who was to be the inſtrument is expreſsly named. The circumſtances of Chriſt's birth, life and miracles, ſufferings and death, were clearly foretold in ancient prophecy; without any equivocation. Theſe things conſidered, Payne muſt be viewed as a ſlanderer, aſſerting without proof.

SECT. VI.

The conſiſtency of Scripture vindicated.

THE enemies of divine revelation pretend to diſcover a great number of inconſiſtencies, and contradictions. And here Payne aſſumes a very formidable appearance, he comes forth brandiſhing (as he would make the world believe) a new piece of armour, ſuch as was never heard of before, he boldly comes to the field, like the Goliah of his party, bidding defiance to all the friends of revelation.

(Part II. p. 4.) He ſays, "I proceed to examine the authenticity of the Bible; and I begin with what are called the five Books of Moſes, *Geneſis*, *Exodus*,

Leviticus, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. My intention is to ſhew that thoſe books are ſpurious, and that Moſes is not the author of them; and ſtill further, that they were not written in the time of Moſes, nor till ſeveral hundred years afterwards; that they are no other than an attempted hiſtory of the life of Moſes, and of the times in which he is ſaid to have lived, and alſo of the times prior thereto, written by ſome very ignorant and ſtupid pretenders to authorſhip, ſeveral hundred years after the death of Moſes, as men now write hiſtories of things that happened, or are ſuppoſed to have happened, ſeveral hundred or ſeveral thouſand years ago."

"The evidence I ſhall produce in this caſe is from the books themſelves; and I will confine myſelf to this evidence only, &c."

"In the firſt place there is no affirmative evidence that Moſes is the author of theſe books, &c." What can he intend by affirmative evidence? unleſs it be that none aſſerts Moſes was the author of them. Such ſenſeleſs ſtuff, one would think, could not have been vented by a man in his wits, for the Jews have uniformly affirmed that Moſes was the writer of them. "They are written in the third perſon; The Lord ſaid unto Moſes—Moſes ſaid to the Lord—The people ſpake to Moſes, &c." But what is this to the purpoſe? Cæſar and Oſſian wrote in the third perſon.

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He aſſerts, (Part II. p. 5.) "That it cannot be admitted that Moſes ſpeaks, without rendering him truly ridiculous and abſurd." Why? "becauſe in Numb. xii. 3. 'Now the man Moſes was very 'meek, &c.' If Moſes ſaid this of himſelf, inſtead of being the meekeſt of men, he was one of the moſt vain and arrogant coxcombs, &c." To quarrel at this, argues the groſſeſt ignorance of the ſimplicity of ancient times.

Upon this argument I may deny that Payne wrote the Age of Reaſon, for diſcovering ſuch conſummate vanity and pride; when he ſays (Part II. p. 50.) "I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood, with an ax on his ſhoulder, and fell trees; here they lie, and the prieſts, if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps, ſtick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow." If Thomas Payne be the author of this, he is without credit, thus to boaſt.

He proceeds to quarrel with the book of Deuteronomy, becauſe the laſt chapter gives an account of Moſes's death, and as Moſes could not write the hiſtory of his own death and burial, he infers from this that Deuteronomy could not be written by Moſes. As to this every body knows, that the laſt chapter of ſaid book was written by Joſhua, as an introduction to his hiſtory; but it will not thence follow that Moſes did not write the reſt. He next takes

takes notice of a variation in the fourth commandment, as mentioned in Ex. xx. and Deut. v. In the one paſſage, the reaſon annexed is taken from the creation; in the other from their deliverance out of Egypt. To this it is replied, that their deliverance from bondage was an additional motive to keep the ſabbath and allow their ſervants to reſt on that day, while the obligation to keep it in commemoration of God's finiſhing the work of creation was no way leſſened.

Part II. p. 8.) "I come now to ſpeak of the hiſtorical and chronological evidence. The chronology I ſhall uſe in the Bible chronology.—It is therefore proper that I inform the readers, (ſuch an one, at leaſt as may not have the opportunity of knowing it) that in the larger Bibles, and alſo in ſome ſmaller ones, there is a ſeries of chronology printed in the margin of every page, for the purpoſe of ſhewing how long the hiſtorical matters ſtated in each page happened, or are ſuppoſed to have happened before Chriſt, and conſequently the diſtance of time between one hiſtorical circumſtance and another." The accuracy of the marginal chronology is not pled for by Bible-believers, they do not inſiſt on its authenticity, or being inſpired, and of courſe his reaſoning on that hypotheſis cannot affect the truth of the hiſtory.

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"In the xiv. chapter of Geneſis, the writer gives an account of Lot being taken, &c.—that Abraham reſcued him, and purſued the enemy to Dan. I come now to ſhew (ſays Payne) that there was no ſuch place as Dan till many years after the death of Moſes, and conſequently that Moſes could not be the writer of the book of Geneſis, where this account of purſuing them to Dan is given---To eſtabliſh this in proof, it is neceſſary to refer from Geneſis to the xviii. of the book called Judges. It is there ſaid that they (the Danites) came unto Laiſh, &c. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, howbeit the name of the city was Laiſh at the firſt."

The objection might ſtand thus; If *Laiſh* did not get the name of Dan, till the time of the Judges, the writer of Geneſis muſt have lived after it was taken by the Danites, and conſequently Moſes could not be the writer of Geneſis! To this it is anſwered, that in tranſcribing the ſcriptures, the tranſcribers frequently gave to perſons and places, names that were modern, inſtead of the ancient ones. This difficulty, however, will diſappear, if this *Dan* mentioned in Geneſis was a river, and not a city or town; and I have more reaſon to conclude that it was a river, than Payne has to aſſert that it was a town. If he does not know, I beg leave to tell him, that Lot was ſettled near the river Jordan; and Jordan

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is ſo called, from the conflux of the rivers *Jor* and *Dan*.

Part II. p. 10. he goes on to argue, or rather aſſert, that Moſes could not be the writer of Geneſis, becauſe "in the 36th chapter of Geneſis there is given a genealogy of the ſons and deſcendants of Eſau, who are called Edomites, and alſo a liſt, by name, of the kings of Edom, in enumerating of which, it is ſaid, ver. 31. "And theſe are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Iſrael." (Page 11.) "It was with conſiſtency that the writer of the Chronicles could ſay as he ſaid, 1 Chron. chap. i. ver. 43. "Theſe are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Iſrael," becauſe he was going to give, and has given, a liſt of the kings that had reigned in Iſrael; but as it is impoſſible that the ſame expreſſion could have been uſed before that period, it is as certain as any thing can be proved from hiſtorical language, that this part of Geneſis is taken from Chronicles, and that Geneſis is not ſo old as Chronicles, &c."

The ſum of all this ſeems to be, that Moſes could not give ſuch an account of Kings reigning over Iſrael, as there were none till Saul, long after Moſes was dead. I am very much afraid that the effects of a late fever has not left him (Payne). I would adviſe him to read the Bible over again. It is clear

that

that he paſſes a deciſion, founded on moſt wilful and criminal ignorance. Was not the man Moſes "King in Jeſhurun."

From the hiſtory it appears, that the Edomites rooted out the Horites or Hittites—by degrees, obtained poſſeſſion of the country, and had a government of their own; and their government was *kingly*. Theſe kings reigned in Edom, "*before* there reigned over the children of Iſrael," that is before Moſes's time, for he was *king* in Jeſhurun. His other objections againſt Moſes are of a piece, reſpecting the manna and the giant's bed; they are ſo frivolous as to deſerve no ſerious refutation.

In page 14. he goes on to the book of Joſhua, and tries to overturn its authenticity, by hinting, that it could not be written by Joſhua, for it gives an account in the laſt chapter, "that Iſrael ſerved the Lord all the days of the elders that outlived him; and infers that Joſhua, though he might know what paſſed in his own day, could not write the hiſtory of Iſrael after he was dead." This, however, is equally frivolous with the objection againſt Moſes; the laſt chapter of Joſhua and the laſt chapter of Deuteronomy, were at leaſt part of them, written by the continuators of the hiſtory. Payne fights with men of ſtraw, when trifling with the terms *until this day, after it, &c.*

I can ſay with propriety that Thomas Payne publiſhed a book, entitled, The Rights of Man, which, inſtead of being burnt, is in the poſſeſſion of many in Great Britain *until this day.* The Rights of Man was publiſhed within theſe few years, and in virtue of the interference of government, none dared to publiſh the like after it, *to this day.*

He goes on to contraſt Joſhua xv. ver. 63. with Judges i. ver. 8. and 2 Sam. v. ver. 4, &c. and avers "that Jeruſalem was not taken till the time of David, and conſequently, that the books of Joſhua and Judges were not written till after the commencement of David's reign, which was 370 years after the death of Joſhua." A more pitiful objection than this could not have been deviſed. Salem, where Melchiſedec reigned, was celebrated in the days of Abraham; Joſhua, in his day, found it a principal city in the ſouth of Canaan. Joſh. x. 1, 3. It fell to Benjamin's lot, Joſh. xviii. and was adjoined to Judah's, Joſh. xv.—The children of Judah took poſſeſſion of it; Judg i. but it afterwards became a city of the Jebuſites, Judg. xix. David, among his firſt expeditions, retook it from the Jebuſites. Pray, how often have ſome of our Weſt India iſlands been taken, loſt, and retaken; and in narrating the hiſtory of the laſt time any of them was taken, could any infer that they were never in our poſſeſſion before?

(Age

(Age of Reaſon, Part II. p. 18.) "Having ſhewn that every book in the Bible, from Gen. to Judges, is without authenticity; I come to the book of Ruth, an idle bungling ſtory, &c."

It is a very eaſy way to get rid of any book, to burleſque and ridicule it; I think, however, he had better done ſo with every book that has come in his way, than expoſed his ignorance.

I ſhall only remark, that if this book was to be taken from the canon of ſcripture, the genealogy of our Lord would be incomplete; the whole of the Old Teſtament, without this book, would be inſufficient to ſhew his being the Meſſiah; of courſe it is of the utmoſt importance to Chriſtianity; though, had it been awanting, I believe Payne knows ſo little, he would hardly have miſſed it.

With regard to what he argues reſpecting 1ſt and 2d Samuel, it is to be obſerved, that he is fighting with his own ſhadow, in proving from detached paſſages, that theſe books were not written by Samuel; for Bible-believers are of opinion, that theſe books bear the name of Samuel in the title, not becauſe he was the writer of them, excepting ſuch as fell within his own time, to the 25th chapter of the firſt book, in which we have an account of his death; but becauſe the firſt book begins with an account of his birth, life, and actions; and the reſt of theſe books include the hiſtory of Saul and David, who

were both anointed by him; hence they have been termed the 1ſt and 2d books of the Kings, and the two that follow, have been denominated the 3d and 4th, which the titles in our tranſlation bear. It is likely that Nathan was the continuator of the hiſtory.

As to the books of Kings and Chronicles, he chiefly hints at ſome apparent oppoſition reſpecting the commencement and duration of the reign of ſome Kings. In relation to this, let it ſuffice to obſerve, that, though by comparing the years of ſeveral of the Kings of Judah and Iſrael, mentioned in the books of Kings and Chronicles, we find that ſome are ſaid, in one of them, to have reigned a few years longer than the account of the years of their reign, mentioned by the other. The ſeeming contradiction may be reconciled by conſidering him as having begun to reign before his father's death, as Solomon before David died; or from the time of his being nominated as his father's ſucceſſor, and acknowledged as ſuch by the people; which was done at times, to prevent diſputes afterwards; and ſometimes, when a king was engaged in foreign wars, and the event uncertain, he named and appointed his ſon to reign in his abſence, from which time he had the title of King though his father was alive: Or when a king was ſuperannuated, or otherwiſe diſqualified to reign, as Uzziah when leprous, he ſettled his ſon as viceroy in his life time,

and

and on that account the ſon is ſaid to reign with his father.

Before I proceed farther, I ſhall take notice of an objection ſtated in a foot note, p. 39. between the 16th and 17th chapters of 1ſt Samuel. In the 16th chapter it is ſaid, that David came to Saul, and ſtood before him, and he loved him greatly; whereas in chap. xvii. we read that he enquired, Whoſe ſon is this youth? How could this be, when he had been in his ſervice before?

There is, however, no inconſiſtency between theſe paſſages; for ſuppoſing Saul's memory failed him, and he did not know David, this is nothing ſtrange. A maſter will ſoon forget a ſervant, if he has been but a ſhort time with him; or if he appears in another dreſs, as David in the inſtance condeſcended on, for he was in the habit of a ſhepherd. Where then is the abſurdity? Suppoſe a man's ſervant ſhall enliſt into the army, and return with his regimentals, and in full uniform; the maſter, moſt likely, would not know him at firſt; where then is the alleged inconſiſtency?

As to his table of the prophets, and the ſilence of the books of Kings and Chronicles reſpecting them, he ſeems to have thrown it in to fill up a page, having had nothing elſe to ſay. And as for Jonah and the whale, we refer the reader to what is ſtated on *Miracle*.

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He then takes notice of the variation, with regard to thoſe who returned from the captivity, as ſtated by Ezra and Nehemiah, and of Ezra's ſeeming inconſiſtency with himſelf. This might ariſe from the conduct of ſome who gave in their names to return, but afterwards declined, and ſome who declined to return at firſt, afterwards went. Nehemiah ſays, *merely*, that he found a regiſter, with ſuch and ſuch names and numbers. The one might aſcertain their number when they ſet out from Babylon; the other, when they came to Jeruſalem. Moreover, there is no doubt but a very conſiderable number of the heathen accompanied them, on their return. Or, there might be a miſtake committed in the tranſcribing; the Hebrews calculated by letters, and if Thomas Payne knows any thing about that language, he muſt grant that a miſtake might be very ready, when it is conſidered, that many of theſe characters are very like one another in form.

As to what he ſays, with regard to the book of Pſalms, affirming that David could not be the writer of them, becauſe the 137th Pſalm, has a reſpect to the exerciſe of the Jews under captivity at Babylon, reminds one of Falſtaff's men of Buckram, for Bible-believers know well that David did not write that Pſalm.

Payne's

Payne's animadverſions on the remainder of the Old Teſtament are ſo jejune and trifling as to deſerve little notice. However, let us ſhortly attend to what he ſays, when charging Jeremiah with duplicity, and prophecying falſehood. (Part II. p. 41.) "It appears from the 38th chapter, that when Jeremiah was in priſon, Zedekiah ſent for him; and at this interview which was private, Jeremiah preſſed it ſtrongly on Zedekiah to ſurrender to the enemy, 'if,' ſays he, ver. 17. 'thou wilt go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy ſoul ſhall live, &c.' Zedekiah was apprehenſive that what paſſed at this conference ſhould be known; and he ſaid to Jeremiah, v. 25. 'If the princes, (meaning thoſe of Judah) hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee and ſay unto thee, declare unto us now what thou haſt ſaid unto the king; hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; and alſo, what the king ſaid unto thee: then thou ſhall ſay unto them, I preſented my ſupplication before the king; that he would not cauſe me to return to Jonathan's houſe to die there. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and aſked him; and he told them according to all the words the king had commanded.' Thus this man of God, as he is called, could tell a lie, or very ſtrongly prevaricate, when he ſuppoſed it would anſwer his purpoſe; for certainly he did not go to Zedekiah, to

make

make his ſupplication; neither did he make it; he went becauſe he was ſent for, and he employed that opportunity, to adviſe Zedekiah to ſurrender himſelf to Nebuchadnezzar."

Thus he endeavours to ſupport the charge of duplicity. It is moſt aſtoniſhing to ſee this vile blaſphemer palming things thus on the ſcripture. The fact of the matter was, that Zedekiah ſent for the prophet Jeremiah, and deſired him to tell the fate of the city. The interview being over, and the king being ſolicitous to preſerve the prophet's life, deſired him to ſay to the princes thus and thus. The princes having come as the king ſuſpected, he told the princes according to the words of the king; where is the lie? where is the prevarication? he did not ſay, neither did the king deſire him to ſay, that he *went to ſupplicate* the king, but that he preſented it. We find in the hiſtory that a petition had been preſented formerly on his behalf, and there is little doubt, but he here renewed his requeſt, when cloſetted with the king; ſo when he told the princes this, he ſinned not, he told a truth to preſerve his life, and he was under no obligation to inform them of *all* that paſſed. In every well governed realm a man muſt be convicted upon evidence, and no man ought to condemn himſelf; though he be really guilty.

In

In ſupport of his prophecying falſely he ſays, " In the 34th chapter is a prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah in theſe words, ver. 2. ' Thus ſaith the Lord, behold I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire; and thou ſhalt not eſcape out of his hand, but ſhall ſurely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes ſhall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon; and he ſhall ſpeak to thee mouth to mouth, and thou ſhalt go to Babylon. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah, thus ſaith the Lord, thou ſhalt not die by the ſword, but thou ſhalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings that were before thee, ſo ſhall they burn odours for thee, and they will lament thee, ſaying, ah, Lord. For I have pronounced the word, ſaith the Lord.' Now inſtead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the king of Babylon, and ſpeaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, and with the burning of odours, as at the funeral of his fathers, (as Jeremiah had declared, the Lord himſelf had pronounced) the reverſe, according to the 52 chapter, was the caſe; it is there ſaid, ver. 10. ' That the king of Babylon ſlew the ſons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in priſon till the day of his death.' What can we then ſay of theſe pro-

phets, but that they are impoſtors and liars?" What can Payne ſay, but what ſavours of malice, lying, and ſlander? for the prophecy was moſt exactly accompliſhed. The city was taken—the men of war fled, and Zedekiah went towards the plain,—the Chaldean ſoldiers took the king, and brought him to the king of Babylon;——he *then beheld* the king of Babylon with *his eyes*——the king of Babylon bound him and carried him to Babylon in chains, put him in priſon till the day of his death; he died in peace, he was not hanged, or beheaded, or otherwiſe put to death; a man dies in peace who dies, not by the ſword, or poiſon or otherwiſe in a violent way. The hiſtory is ſilent indeed reſpecting the funeral rites, but as the reſt was fulfilled, we may preſume ſo was this; when the paſſion of kings is over, they will reflect that human affairs are in a ſtate of conſtant fluctuation, and have a reſpect to Royalty when fallen. And though his eyes were put out, he ſaw the king of Babylon with his eyes, before he was deprived of his ſight.

He throws out a number of reflections againſt the Jews; imputing murder and aſſaſſination to them. However it may be obſerved, in relation to this, that ſeveral acts of cruelty aſcribed to them, appear on a more accurate examination, to be grounded on an incorrect tranſlation of ſome paſſages in the Old Teſtament. As a ſpecimen of this, we read 2 Sam.

xii.

xii. 31. that 'when Rabbah was taken, David brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under ſaws and harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them paſs through the brick-kilns;' hence it has been inferred, that he put them to death with the moſt exquiſite torments. But it has been ſhewn by ſeveral learned critics, that our verſion would have been more conformable to the original, if the paſſage had been rendered thus: 'He put them *to* ſaws, and harrows, and *to* axes of iron, and made them paſs *to* to the brick kilns:' i. e. he put them to hard labour with theſe tools, and at the brick-kilns. (See Omerod's Remarks on Dr Prieſtley's Diſquiſitions, 2d edit. p. 72.) With regard to the alleged injuſtice of Iſrael to the Canaanites; the neceſſity of their being extirpated, or at leaſt the deſtruction of their national polity,—the propriety of this being effected by the Jews, and the advantages which other nations derived from it. See clearly ſtated in Biſhop Law's conſiderations on the Theory of Religion. See alſo Butler's Analogy.

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Before we leave the Old Teſtament, we ſhall conſider the qualifications of Moſes as a hiſtorian, in relating what paſſed before his day, reſpecting the flood and other events. As to inſpiration, let it be, for the ſake of argument, out of the queſtion.

In relation to Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, he himſelf was an actor in all, and had the chief management of public affairs; as the lawgiver, every thing was under his cogniſance, ſo that this part of the hiſtory, excepting the laſt chap. of Deut. which gives an account of his death, may be denominated Moſes's hiſtory of his own time. As for the book of Geneſis, he might learn the contents of it from tradition. The longevity of the Patriarchs enabled them to tranſmit the facts; they paſſed through very few hands, and could not well be miſinterpreted or miſtaken. We cannot, for inſtance, imagine that the grand-children of Jacob could be ignorant of the affairs of their family;—of their pedigree, and the place from whence they came into Egypt;—Can we ſuppoſe, that an event ſo very remarkable, attended with ſuch circumſtances, as the ſelling of Joſeph was, could be forgotten in ſo ſhort a time? Could Jacob be ignorant of the country whence Abraham came; more eſpecially, when he was ſo long there, living in Laban's family? Could Abraham, who lived in the ſame age with Shem, be ignorant of the flood, when Shem, from whom

whom he deſcended, was one of the perſons ſaved by the ark? And can we ſuppoſe that Shem was ignorant of the tranſactions before the flood, when he was born long before the death of Methuſelah, who lived before the death of Adam? The knowledge of theſe things therefore could eaſily be tranſmitted to Moſes; for Adam might tranſmit it to Methuſelah, and Methuſelah to Shem; Shem to Abraham, &c. Thus laying inſpiration aſide, the tradition was eaſy.—Moſes was a man of great judgment and experience, capable of diſtinguiſhing between fable and reality,—eminent in natural and political knowledge;—brought up in Pharaoh's court, and was ſkilled in all the wiſdom of Egypt.

The author of the Age of Reaſon, after a torrent of blaſphemy, reſpecting the conception of Jeſus Chriſt, the great myſtery of the goſpel; ſays, p. 52. "The firſt chapter of Matthew begins with giving a genealogy of Jeſus Chriſt; and in the third chapter of Luke, there is alſo given a genealogy of Jeſus Chriſt. Did theſe two agree, it would not prove the genealogy to be true, becauſe it might nevertheleſs be a fabrication, but as they contradict each other in every particular, it proves falſehood abſolutely, &c. Beſides which, there is only the two names of David and Joſeph that are alike in the two liſts."

To

To ſettle the genealogy of Jeſus Chriſt, it will be neceſſary to attend to the following things, viz. That Matthew deſcends downwards from father to ſon; Luke aſcends upwards from ſon to father.—Matthew reckons only from Abraham, Luke traces back to Adam.—That the names cannot be the ſame ſeeing Matthew reckons the genealogy of Joſeph, the ſuppoſed father of Chriſt; Luke reckons the genealogy of Mary. If it be ſaid, Luke only mentions Joſeph, not Mary, chap. iii. 23. therefore both Matthew and Luke reckon the genealogy of Joſeph. To this it is anſwered, that Matthew ſpeaks of Jacob as the natural father of Joſeph, ver. 16. Luke of Heli as his father-in-law, as he was eſpouſed to Mary the daughter of Heli; and he does this becauſe it was not the cuſtom of the Jews to reckon genealogies by women, but by men; accordingly we find Naomi calls Orpah and Ruth daughters, while they were only her daughters-in-law. Beſides, Joſeph and Mary were both of the houſe of David, for it is to be noticed, that Matthew reckons the deſcent of Joſeph from Solomon the Son of David, and Luke ſhews Mary's deſcent from Nathan, another of David's ſon's, ſo that Matthew proves the theſis, that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of David, the ſon of Abraham.

Moreover, it would appear that they took the names as they found them regiſtrated with the Jews; and

and the word which is rendered *(as was ſuppoſed)* in Luke iii. 23. has a reſpect to the regiſtration of the names; and may be rendered *(as found in the public records)* and if they had copied them unfairly, the Jews had opportunity to detect the fraud and forgery. I am the rather of this opinion, becauſe when we compare the Chronicles with theſe genealogies in Matthew and Luke, we find that in Matthew *three* kings are entirely paſſed by, between Joram and Ozias, who, had they been mentioned, would have made ſeventeen generations. Their names have, perhaps, been neglected in the record, on account of their connection with the impious family of Ahab, againſt which the judgments of heaven were denounced; and Ahaziah, the firſt of theſe three, was Ahab's ſon-in-law. 2 Kings viii. 26, 27. And if we number the names, we find there is one wanting to make up the three fourteens. To obviate this difficulty it is reckoned, that the Jechoniah mentioned, ver. 11. and Jechoniah mentioned, ver. 12. were two different perſons, the one the father, and the other the ſon; the Jechoniah mentioned, ver. 11. being the ſame with Jehoiakim the father of Jechoniah, as in 2 Chron. iii. 15, 16. for often the ſame perſon had different names, and that both under the Old and New Teſtament; e. g. Azariah is denominated Uzziah, and in Matthew Ozias. Peter was ſometimes called Peter, and ſometimes

times Cephas. Sometimes the mediate, and at other times the immediate father is mentioned, Matth. i. 21. The ſon of David, the ſon of Abraham, ver. 2. Abraham begat Iſaac, and Iſaac begat Jacob.

In tracing Joſeph's deſcent from Solomon in the firſt of Matthew, and in tracing Mary's deſcent from Nathan, Solomon's brother, we find Zorobabel and Salathiel mentioned, though both their progenitors and ſucceſſors, their fathers and their children, are very different names in Matthew from what they are in Luke. Now, though the names of Zorobabel and Salathiel be the ſame, the perſons were different, that is, there was a Zorobabel and Salathiel that deſcended from David by Solomon, and another Zorobabel and Salathiel that deſcended from David by Nathan's line. Theſe conſiderations ſerve to ſhew, that the evangeliſts copied the names from the public records, and put them down juſt as they found them. I beg leave to add, that from Payne's own liſts, he proves how ſuperficially he has attended to this ſubject; for he ſays, (Part II. p. 52.) "There are only the two names of David and Joſeph that are alike in the two liſts. His own liſts, however, clearly condemn him; for Zorobabel and Salathiel are mentioned by himſelf in the liſts he has ſet down. "The legs of the lamb are not equal."

(Page 55.) Payne tries to diſprove the truth of the goſpel-hiſtory, by ſnarling at the writers of the

New

New Teſtament, for not writing word for word the ſame, ſuch as the inſcription that was put over our Saviour, &c. I aſk, if they were originally written in one and the ſame language? was not one inſcription written in Greek, one in Hebrew, and another in Latin. Here was a difference at firſt, and in tranſlating a paſſage from one language into another by different perſons, a *verbal* difference might happen. The difference here between the evangeliſts is purely *verbal*, no way affecting the ſenſe.

From this verbal difference in the inſcription, as mentioned by the evangeliſts, he draws an inference (Part II. p. 56.) "We may infer, theſe circumſtances trivial as they are, that thoſe writers, whoever they were, and in whatever time they lived, were not preſent at the ſcene. The only one of the men called Apoſtles, who appears to have been near the ſpot, was Peter," &c. Whether this inference be juſtly or unjuſtly drawn from the goſpel hiſtory; or whether Payne has read with attention the books which he has the temerity to condemn; may be learned from John xix. ver. 26, 27. 'When Jeſus therefore ſaw his mother, and the diſciple ſtanding by whom he loved.——And from that hour that diſciple took her unto his own *home*.' And the ſame chapter, ver. 34, 35. we are told that John ſaw the ſoldier pierce his ſide with a ſpear, and witneſſed the iſſuing out of blood and water; 'But one of the

ſoldiers with a ſpear pierced his ſide, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that ſaw it bare record, and his record is true, &c.' Whether ſuch an inconſiderate quibbler be fit to publiſh a commentary on the Bible, the above will ſhew.

As to how John could eſcape, when Herod ſent forth and ſlew the young children; he ſhould have firſt ſhewn that John was in that part of the country, at the time; and whether or not John and Jeſus were of the ſame tribe, &c.

He hints that our Lord could not write. Does he prove this by the hiſtory itſelf? Is it any where ſaid that he could not write? Is it any where ſaid in the goſpel hiſtory, that Jeſus ſtooped down and wrote on the ground? Had I any perſonal acquaintance of Payne, I would ſeriouſly adviſe him to ſtudy Deiſm and Chriſtianity:—Had he been properly verſant in either, he never would have ventured to expoſe Deiſm as he has done; and had he carefully read the ſcriptures, he never would have cut ſuch a pitiful figure as a commentator.

As to what he throws out reſpecting the time of our Lord's being crucified, from Mark's ſaying "he was crucified at the third hour (nine in the morning); and John ſaying, it was the ſixth hour (twelve at noon)." And (in a foot note, ſame page) "According to John, the ſentence was not paſſed till about the ſixth hour (noon), and conſequently, the execution

execution could not be till the afternoon; but Mark ſays expreſsly, that he was crucified at the third hour (nine in the morning)."——I reply, it may be noticed, that the *third* hour mentioned by Matthew is to be underſtood according to the Jewiſh computation, for our nine o'clock, and ſo on to twelve: Whereas the *ſixth* hour, at which John ſays our Lord was condemned, is to be taken, according to the Roman computation, (for our ſix o'clock in the morning,) that evangeliſt having wrote his hiſtory after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. Thus the accounts exactly agree, reſpecting his condemnation and crucifixion.

He has a ſilly cavil about our Lord's reſurrection, ...about there being but one angel at the ſepulchre, according to one evangeliſt, and two angels ſtated by another. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that frequently one evangeliſt tells a particular fact with ſome few circumſtances, and another writer tells the ſame fact, but tells more or fewer circumſtances. It ſeems, that either only one of the two angels appeared without the ſepulchre, and then went into it, and was ſeen with the other angel, one at the head, and another at the feet of the place where the body lay: Or rather, there is a reference made to different appearances, at different places, and at different times.

As to what he ſays of the diſciples being repreſented as in Galilee, and cloſetted in Jeruſalem at one and the ſame time; it is not founded in fact; the goſpels ſay no ſuch thing; but what will not this bigotted ſlanderer ſay?

There is no doubt he has read the New Teſtament, but not with that attention that he ought, or he would have known who were apoſtles. He reckons Luke one of the Eleven; he ought, before he wrote his commentary, to have known, that Luke was not an apoſtle. In the preface to his hiſtory, he tells us that he wrote from the teſtimony of others. This muſt either proceed from ignorance or from malice; if from the former, his qualifications for commenting on ſcripture will be obvious; if from the latter, it muſt open the eyes of mankind to ſee his daring impudence.

He cloſes with the time our Lord was in the grave, "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, but it happens awkwardly enough that Chriſt, according to their own account, was but one day and two nights in the grave; about 36 hours, inſtead of 72; that is, the Friday night, the Saturday, and the Saturday night, for they ſay he was up on the Sunday morning by ſun-riſe or before, &c."

This has been obviated, by a Tertian or third day ague, which is ſo denominated though there is only one day's intermiſſion betwixt the paroxiſms, and

and ſo the firſt and third day are included in the computation. Beſides, the ſcripture often ſpeaks of a number of days, incluſive of the firſt and laſt, as when it is ſaid, when eight days were accompliſhed, our Saviour was circumciſed, including the days of his birth and his circumciſion, between which ſix days intervened; thus our Saviour continued three days in the ſtate of the dead incluſive of the firſt and laſt, or, he aroſe again the third day according to the ſcriptures.

On Paul's Epiſtles, he ſays very little, and nothing to the purpoſe; he deals reproach very liberally, and is ſparing of common ſenſe; he tries to ape Voltaire, and affects to attack Paul as chargeable with a philoſophical abſurdity, when he ſays, 'that which thou ſoweſt is not quickened except it die.' He wiſhes to triumph in this ſuppoſed abſurdity, ſee *Voltaire, Queſtions ſur l'Encyclopedie.* But Mr Bonet of Geneva, a ſuperior phyſiologiſt to either Voltaire or Payne, juſtifies the poſition as philoſophically true. The exterior *integument* of the grain, undoubtedly corrupts and dies, while the *germ*, remains and lives.

SECT.

SECT. VII.

The authenticity of Scripture Hiſtory, confirmed by cotemporary, or at leaſt by very ancient writers, who had opportunity to know the facts publiſhed, and who could not be biaſſed in favour of ſuch as publiſhed them.

AS to the hiſtory of Moſes, there may ſeem to be a want of Vouchers, and it muſt be admitted, we cannot find cotemporary writers to confirm Moſes's hiſtory, for a very obvious reaſon, Moſes being the moſt ancient hiſtorian in the world. Moſes's hiſtory is ſtrictly the hiſtory of the church, and contains the narration of facts that more eſpecially belonged to the Jews. The circumſtances of the reſt of the world were ſuch, that no very authentic memoirs of this people could be expected from them. They were without the pale of the Jewiſh church, and had very little acceſs to know what was tranſacted within it. It is to be conſidered that the reſt of mankind were involved in ignorance and ſuperſtition. Upon the confuſion of tongues at *Babel*, the knowledge of religion began to decline. The ſons of *Noah* after their diſperſions and plantations gradually degenerated. In ſuch circumſtances, it is not likely they could improve in knowledge. It behoved

behoved to take ſome time to ſettle their form of government, and till this was effected, they had no opportunities to improve in arts and ſciences. That this was the caſe is beyond a doubt. They wanted the neceſſary means to preſerve the memory of things, and of courſe could ill write hiſtory. The Grecians, who greatly boaſt on this head, had not the uſe of letters till *Cadmus* taught them theſe, who was but cotemporary with *Joſhua* or, as others have thought with Samuel. They had not learning to record things relating to themſelves, far leſs inclination to intereſt themſelves in the affairs of others. It has indeed been ſaid by ſome learned men, that the Greeks were taught before *Cadmus*, by *Cecrops*, the firſt king of *Athens*, who led a colony out of Egypt, fixed in *Greece*, and built that city. But it appears, that if *Cecrops* did introduce letters, there are no monuments of his characters remaining. The moſt ancient ſeem to be thoſe taught by *Cadmus*. The great events recorded in ſcripture, took place among a people little known to theſe Barbarians; it is no wonder that theſe were not hiſtorians of the church. The moſt ancient celebrated hiſtorian among the *Pagans*, Sanchoniatho has many alluſions to ſcripture hiſtory related by Moſes,—concerning the creation, the progreſs of arts, the calling of Abraham, &c. and Porphyry an ancient philoſopher and an enemy to chriſtianity, tries to eſtabliſh his

hiſtory,

hiſtory, from its agreement with Moſes's writings on theſe ſubjects. That Moſes was owned among them is evident from the writings of *Longinus*. Strabo ſpeaks of him in the moſt honourable terms, and *Trogus Pompeius* takes notice of his beauty and wiſdom. Beſides, there were a great variety of religious rites, which they learned from the Jews, ſuch as circumciſion,—the day of reſt, new-moons, and eſpecially the practice of ſacrifices. Theſe things were notorious among the heathen nations. Theſe muſt be looked on as ſo many veſtiges of the laws of Moſes, and atteſtations to the ſacred hiſtory; for theſe things can never be accounted for, but on ſuppoſition that the Bible hiſtory is genuine and authentic.

The truth of the facts narrated in the New Teſtament, is confirmed by friends, avowed enemies, and by heathen writers. The teſtimony of Joſephus is well known; no doubt, this has been conſidered by ſome as an interpolation; but the paſſage is quoted by *Euſebius*, *Calleſtus*, Sozoman Suidas, &c.

We have a ſtriking atteſtation of the innocence of our Lord in *Judas*,—and it is not a mere arbitrary circumſtance that his conduct is related by the evangeliſts,—who when he ſaw Chriſt capitally condemned, an event he did not expect, ruſhed into the temple like a madman, threw down the wages of unrighteouſneſs before the prieſt and rulers, and with great

great emotion *publicly* told them, he had betrayed innocent blood. This is the teſtimony of an *enemy*, and merits attention. *Suetonius* mentions Chriſt by name *, and ſays that *Claudius* expelled thoſe from Rome who adhered to his cauſe. *Tacitus* mentions the progreſs of Chriſtianity, the violent death that Chriſt died; that he flouriſhed under Tiberius; that Pilate was then procurator in Judea, and that the original author of this ſect was Chriſt †.

Pliny, who lived in *Trajan*'s reign, and attained high honor in the ſtate, in a letter written to the emperor within 40 years after the death of Paul, draws an amiable picture of the deportment of Chriſtians, and the purity of their manners, when he ſays, "Eſſent ſoliti ſtuato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Chriſto quaſi Deo dicere ſecum invicem: ſeque ſacramento non in ſcelus aliquod obſtringere, ſed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem falerent, ne depoſitum appellati abnegarent: quibus peractis morem ſibi diſcidendi fuiſſe, rurſuſque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiſcuum tamen et innoxium." *Plinii. Epiſt. Lib.* X. *Epiſt.* 97. *p.* 724. In our language it may run thus;

* Judeos impulſore *Chriſto* aſſidue tumultuantes Roma expulit. *Suetonius*, p. 544.

† Auctor nominis ejus Chriſtus, qui Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum ſupplicio affectus erat. *Tacit. Annal. Lib.* XV.

"It was their cuſtom to aſſemble before light, on a ſtated day, and mutually to recite an hymn to Chriſt as God, binding themſelves by oath, not for a wicked purpoſe, but on the contrary, never to commit a fraud, not to ſteal or debauch, never to falſify their word &c." Celſus a celebrated Deiſt, who lived in the 2d century, ſpeaks of the author of Chriſtianity as having lived but a little before his time, and mentions the principal facts in the goſpel hiſtory relating to the birth, life, doctrine, and miracles, death, and reſurrection of *Chriſt*—declaring that he had copied the account from the writings of the evangeliſts. He quotes theſe books and makes extracts from them, as being compoſed by the diſciples and companions of Jeſus, and under the names they preſently bear; he acknowledges the miracles performed by Chriſt, that they were *really* performed, he never calls in queſtion; he attributes them to our Lord's ſuperior ſkill in magic. And what teſtimony can be more credible than that of an enemy.

Julian, who flouriſhed in the 4th century, produces no counter evidence in refutation of the goſpel hiſtory, though he mentions the name of all the four Evangeliſts,—never attempts to diſprove the authticity of their writings, or to deny the truth of Chriſt's miracles.

Lucian bears his teſtimony to the truth and influence of goſpel principles, and that Chriſt was the author

thor of this new *religion*. The teſtimony of friends to Chriſtianity is well known, Euſebius, Origen, St Jerom &c.; And the public records have been quoted, for its truth, as Pilate behoved to record the trial, condemnation, and execution of Jeſus Chriſt.

So much in reply to Payne's Age of Reaſon, the arguments which I have uſed, are ſuch as have been fully ſtated and illuſtrated by various writers on the ſubject; and have been ſucceſsfully employed in defending revealed religion in times paſt. Though what has been advanced is only a compend of the ſentiments of writers againſt infidelity, it ought not to be diſregarded, being deſigned for ſuch as are in a great meaſure unacquainted with the controverſy, into whoſe hands Payne's Age of Reaſon may come, and not for the learned world. It is one of the Lord's righteous judgments on the nations, that he has permitted this man to ſhew a brow of braſs, under the deluſive maſk of friendſhip to liberty, for ſeducing men from their duty to God and civil rulers.

APPENDIX.

IF the Scriptures be true, as we have endeavoured to prove, they are the only rule of the faith and practice of Chriſtians; and if they act in character, they will never adopt the wild theories of ſome modern reformers; there is a civil conſtitution to preſerve, as well as reform; and however friendly they may be to reform in church and ſtate; while religion is to be preſerved as well as purified, they ought to guard againſt putting confidence in men who are avowed enemies to revealed religion. No doubt we ought to diſtinguiſh between a cauſe and the management of it; but if men avowedly wound the feelings of Chriſtians, by adopting the writings of Payne in the groſs, Chriſtians ought to guard againſt encouraging reformers of ſuch a deſcription. I ſaid we have a conſtitution topreſerve, and it is the excellence of the Britiſh conſtitution, to realize the conveniencies of ſociety, without materially infringing our natural rights. The few at leaſt which may be forfeited, bear no proportion to ſuch as are ſubſtitutedin their place. Perſonal ſecurity, liberty, and private property, are confirmedto all by law. It aſſigns to every one the right of applying to courts of juſtice, for redreſs or damages, and theſe courts are open to all. It would be eaſy to prove by an obvi-

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ous compariſon, the vaſt ſuperiority of our political inſtitutions; and that of courſe to contribute for the purity and ſafety of the conſtitution ought to be an excluſive object of intereſt and attention, to all who love their native land. Our conſtitution originates in nothing accidental; but is the reſult of long experience and ſound obſervation. And though corruptions may have crept in, yet one peculiar excellence of that conſtitution is, it *contains within itſelf the means of reformation, without having recourſe to revolt.* Chriſtians ſhould guard againſt ſtrengthening that party in the ſtate, who would overthrow the conſtitution. Many are the devices of Satan, he adopts every method to compaſs the ruin of mankind, and ſuch as he cannot detain in profanity, he tries to enſnare by ſpecious pretences to purity. He who runs may read this, in the political diſputes which have taken place, and the infidelity which ſeems to ſucceed.

It is not my deſign here, either to juſtify or condemn the preſent meaſures of government. Of two evils, which is to be choſen? Whether a civil or a foreign war has the moſt horrid aſpect? Whether the profeſſed friends of reform have conducted themſelves as good ſubjects or not? Whether or not it is natural for government to leſſen our liberties, in proportion to our licenciouſneſs? Whether, admitting Robert Watt to have been a government ſpy,

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this leſſened the evidence of the then exiſting conſpiracy, or not? Whether in a nation, where exceſſive diſſipation obtains, it is likely a republic can be eſtabliſhed which will ſurvive a ſevere ſhock? Whether it is better for France to have 500 deſpots, or only one? Whether the diviſion of ſentiment that prevails among American ſtates, prognoſticates ſtability and permanency to their form of government? Theſe and ſimilar queſtions, I leave to the diſcuſſion of thoſe who ought to be better verſed in politics.

The inſtitution of the magiſtrate's office is not founded in revealed, but in the principles of natural religion, and though the magiſtrate, in the diſcharge of his office to his ſubjects in *common*, ought to conduct himſelf according to natural principles; yet in things that are *optional*, with regard to the ſubjects, he is to conduct himſelf according to the principles of revealed religion; in this point of view, magiſtrates are to encourage virtue and diſcountenance vice; and they may do this without invading our natural rights as ſubjects. For example, I have no right to complain of any encroachment on my natural privileges and rights, becauſe I am not a miniſter of ſtate.

Though the reaſon of obedience is alſo founded in that original inſtitution, yet a natural deſire of liberty is to be directed by the holy ſcriptures, and if chriſtian ſubjects act in character, inſtead of ſtirring

ring up *ſedition* and *tumult*, they are bound to be examplary in obedience, and ſtudy to lead quiet and peaceable lives, praying for the *internal* peace and proſperity of their country, for in the peace thereof we ſhall have peace. Paul writing to Titus, chap. iii. 1. Exhorts him to remind his hearers of that ſubjection which was due to principalities and powers.

When we recur to ſacred hiſtory we find it was the uniform practice of the ſaints, to obey, whatever rulers were recognized as ſuch, by the body politic of which they were members, in their lawful commands. Under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation this was their general practice toward their own kings,—in Egypt, and at Babylon, they were never charged with a crime on that account. It is true, that Iſrael ſinned in the circumſtances with which their government was changed,—it is alſo true that they ſet up kings but not by him, yet it is the groſſeſt blaſphemy from thence to infer, that *kingly* government is unlawful in its nature and operations, for we find God gave ſpecial direction and encouragement in the choice they made. Deut. xvii. 14—20. Though he diſapproved of the manner of it, yet he commiſſioned Samuel to comply with their requeſt; he ſignified his approbation of *kingly government*, by extraordinary interpoſitions in their favour in their choice of ſome kings, and gave them ſome

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ſpecial promiſes in relation to *monarchy*, and threatened them with the want of it as a ſevere judgment. Hoſ. iii. 4.

When David was perſecuted by Saul, he repeatedly owned his authority,—the ſucceeding prophets uniformly conducted themſelves, in a manner that was calculated to recommend obedience, hence Elijah honoured Ahab as king, before the people; nay Daniel and others accepted of commiſſions from the kings of Babylon and Perſia, and were never criminated for ſo doing.

The conduct of the ſaints under the New Teſtament ought to be equally *loyal*, this is ſtrickingly exemplified by Paul, who, ſenſible of the advantages that attend regular government, anſwered gladly before *Felix* as a judge,---vindicated his innocency before *Feſtus*,---conſidered it as a ſingular favour to have acceſs to anſwer for himſelf before king *Agrippa*, and actually appealed to Cæſar, which was a plain homologation of Cæſar's authority and right to rule. Theſe conſiderations ought to impreſs the minds of all who believe the Bible.

1ſt. Our duty toward kings is to be expreſſed by fearing them; this is not a ſlaviſh fear, nor does it merely reſpect the inward frame of heart, but external loyalty, the truth of this is obvious, ſeeing this fear in ſcripture is connected with the fear of the Lord, which implies external homage and inward

ward regard, "My ſon fear thou the Lord and the king." Chriſtians are not bound to obey habitual tyrants; but are bound to obey lawful commands. They are to ſubmit to ſuch as are owned by the body politic. "Fear thou the king" was an injunction laid upon the Jews, and binding on every ſucceeding age, in regard it never was repealed or ſuſpended; and muſt be obligatory ſo long as the *Primores regni*, acknowledge any particular perſon for their king, or ſupreme ruler; ſo long as they conſent to his authority, the regal office remains veſted in him. Civil authority having its riſe in the *Primores regni*, according to the law of nature, obedience from the ſubjects cannot be diſpenſed with, (whatever defects be in the government) ſo long as theſe *Primores regni* homologate his rule.

2d. By contributing toward their ſupport. The conduct of our bleſſed Lord is a proper model of imitation here; "Render unto Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's." Cæſar was by conſent of the nation in the actual exerciſe of government, as was clear from their current coin, for though its having his image and ſuperſcription, was no evidence that all the money in the country was his, yet it was an undeniable proof of his authority, and that they were bound to obey, and ſupport him in the exerciſe of his government.

Chriſtians do well if they take heed to Rom. xiii. 1.—8. the duty enjoined is ſubjection, which they were to evidence by rendering *tribute*, *cuſtom*, *fear*, not from apprehenſions of danger, but from a ſenſe of duty, " not for wrath but for conſcience ſake." The duty was incumbent on all to whom the apoſtle wrote, and on every chriſtian ſtill, called " every ſoul." The profeſſors of religion were reproached with being inimical to the ſtate, and diſaffected to regular government; to wipe off this foul reproach, the apoſtle ſhews that obedience to the powers that were, was a law of Chriſt, whoſe religion has a tendency to lead quiet and peaceable lives, and obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake. Magiſtrates are called *God's miniſters*, and *powers that be*. The reaſon of this obedience is founded in the inſtitution, " there is no power but of God, the powers that be are of God;" this does not ſay that habitual tyrants, or mere uſurpers as ſuch, are to be obeyed; for they are not ordained of God in a moral ſenſe, and ſubjection can only be binding toward theſe who are in preſent poſſeſſion and exerciſe of government, by the conſent of civil ſociety; it follows, that he who reſiſteth the power reſiſteth the ordinance of God; and ſuch as reſiſt regular government, reflect on God's ordinance, ſuch as cannot endure regular government are ſtigmatized in ſcripture with this epithet, *Sons of Belial*.

3d. By

3d. By honouring them. "Give honour to whom honour is due;" and that amid grievances, "If the ſpirit of the ruler riſe up againſt thee, leave not thy place;" that is, though the civil magiſtrate take up a groundleſs offence, yet ſubjects are not to go out of their place, but conduct themſelves towards the Ruler as ſubjects, "for yielding pacifieth great offences:" whereas if they leave their place the offence may be encreaſed and perpetuated. See Gib's Diſplay.

4th. By keeping at a diſtance from men of reſtleſs tempers, "Meddle not with them who are given to change." Where a ſpirit of innovation prevails, in men's conduct toward civil rulers, innovation as to religious principles and practice, may be expected; innovation in the one caſe, will be accompanied with innovation in the other, which is awfully verified in the preſent day, by ſome ſervile imitators of Thomas Payne, "My ſoul come not thou into their ſecrets, into their aſſemblies; mine honour be not thou united."

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